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**TRAVELS OF A REPUBLICAN  
RADICAL IN SEARCH OF HOT  
WATER**

**By H. G. WELLS**

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## CHAPTER I

### S.S. " PUKKA SAHIB " \*

*Singapore.*

LONG years ago, when his Majesty King George the Fifth was Prince of Wales, he made a memorable speech at the Guildhall of which the dominant phrase was " Wake Up, England ".

The entire Empire was stirred by this appeal for a renewal of effort and energy; and the word efficiency broke out in most unexpected quarters. Everyone who wanted any kind of change interpreted it according to the imagination of his heart and applauded loudly. I saw a new Prince Albert, so to speak, waking up the universities, and all sorts of things in that style. But the power of inertia in a still prosperous community was very great, and the impetus of this royal appeal ebbed.

The war was a period of agitated stress rather than of a conspicuous search for competence and effective co-operation; and an interlude of victorious self-complacency on the part of our elder statesmen and of suppressed restlessness and derision on the part of the young did nothing to

\* *News Chronicle*, Feb. 13th, 1939.

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recall that brief flash of keenness which the Prince of Wales had shown.

It is no good ignoring the realities of the British situation. Our young people find no inspiration in it. The national lack of keenness is glaringly evident. The need for some emphatic repetition of "Wake Up, England" is urgent. There is a manifest need of new blood and of an imaginative renaissance of the British section of the English-speaking community if it is not to slide down into an irrevocable decline.

I have just been making a little tour out to Australia by sea, home by air, via Java, Burma, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Athens; and I want to record as stimulatingly and disagreeably for the English reader as possible some impressions of that journey. I am returning by Dutch plane from Sydney because nobody questions that this is the best organised service.

Thirty years ago, when Blériot flew the Channel, I wrote: "The world cannot wait for the English." The world has not waited. I am flying home "Dutch".

On the way out I travelled by the good ship "Pukka Sahib". She was a little late starting from Marseilles and lost time steadily as she went through the Canal and down the Red Sea. "The 'Pukka Sahib' is always late," said the knowing ones. So all engagements made by a simple-minded passenger, relying on the schedule

for Bombay, Colombo and Perth, had to be scrapped.

Late as was the "Pukka Sahib" the air-mails were later. Apparently the Post Office had been taken by surprise and overwhelmed by Christmas. I was anxious about the illness of a friend and was engaged in various business transactions and I had counted on letters at Bombay, Colombo and so forth. They came straggling along to me, travel-soiled and useless, at Melbourne and Canberra after many days.

The good ship "Pukka Sahib" is only 19 years old, but from her palsied vibrations she might be 90. She is a steady, conservative vessel, but at the slightest attempt to press her she shivers, squeaks and rattles with indignation. You might as soon ask a British public school or university to keep up with the times. You might as soon ask Mr. Chamberlain what he thinks he is doing to the world.

Her cabins are extremely small and you pay a considerable supplement for the private use of a small but historically interesting bathroom. The bath water is salt water. There is no shower or any such luxurious fittings; but fresh water for a sponge-down is brought in a can with much salaaming and so forth by a coloured attendant. You are awakened and summoned to meals by a strident bugling.

Telephony is still in its infancy on the "Pukka

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Sahib ". If you want to ring up and talk to a friend, even if it is in a port you are approaching, it is an extremely expensive, difficult and even maddening undertaking. No one has ever thought of putting the telephone directories of the ports of call aboard.

Cyclostyled radio news is distributed each morning: almost incredibly jejune and pro-Government; and, except for that, you are almost as completely cut off from the outer world as you would have been in the middle of the nineteenth century. There are no films, good or bad, to combat this illusion of complete relapse into Victorianism.

In such circumstances the observant voyager is naturally thrown back upon his fellow passengers. Many were young or old officials or business managers for India, or home-going Australians, or young women going out to be married in India. They seemed as nice and under-educated a lot as one could well imagine. One or two of the young men had read and thought in a rather puzzled, interrogative way, along the lines of Aldous Huxley and the Left Book Club. The rest appeared completely innocent of any religious, political or social questionings. All that was highbrow stuff, and got you nowhere.

They all danced the Lambeth Walk and the Palace Glide with an inexhaustible enthusiasm, and "Oi" became a sort of gladness cry, as

familiarity increased. They seemed to regard the Nazi and Fascist salutes facetiously, but they stiffened up with a sort of stern effacement of expression when the strains of "God Save the King" broke out.

The English church service was well attended on Sunday, especially by the ladies; and hymns were sung with great earnestness. A charming, elderly colonel, who had evidently done good work in his day, considered that Chamberlain was giving in too much to those "dagoes and mad-men", but otherwise confined his political remarks to Indian reminiscences. My general feeling of having slipped back in time was intensified.

I landed in Bombay before dawn, and motored with some Parsee friends through the streets, where the pavements were still littered with sleeping figures, to see the sunrise from Malabar Hill. It is one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen. Then breakfast, a brief visit to a Sacred Tank, surrounded by numerous small temples awaking to active prayer; and then a sort of morning conversazione. A very interesting meeting indeed. Everyone talked either good or slightly staccato English; had read English, and was, I realised, quite ripe to think in English and to co-operate in an English-speaking world synthesis. If anyone would allow it.

The "Pukka Sahib" tradition will have none of that sort of thing. I found a very under-

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standable note of resentful exclusion in that talk on Malabar Hill; and found it sounding loud and emphatic in the clutch of Bombay newspapers I carried back to study in the ship. Therein I found an exasperated and exasperating assemblage of tendential news and comment, converging on the idea that the British Empire is an entirely played out system; an indictment without any conception of reconstruction. It was "anti" stuff throughout. No subsidised alien propaganda could be as effective as this spontaneous and indignant reaction to the pretentious exclusiveness of our ruling class. Yet so far nothing is very apparent in this sample of the oriental English-speaking mind, except a critical discontent.

"Do you sympathise with Indian aspirations?" said a persistent young Indian journalist, pursuing me like a midge. "I hate aspirations," I said. "What are your intentions?" He hadn't thought of any intentions. At present there are no intentions. There are merely the disapproving, non-co-operative poses of Gandhi and Tagore.

The idea of a world-wide co-ordination of the modern creative spirit, using our world-wide language as a medium, has yet to touch the Indian imagination. It is still a narrow, partly paralysed imagination, under the strangling and sterilising influence of the British ruling class.

I drove down through streets, now vividly busy,

to that handsome landing archway the Gate of India. Close by is the Yacht Club. "There," said my host, "you will find most of your British friends from the ship having a proper British breakfast. No Indians are admitted."

All over India the British official business folk seclude themselves in little gossiping clubs, aloof from the intellectual and social movements of the land. They are not leading them. They have neither the education nor the imagination to lead them. They just keep aloof and sniff and snub. Up country, one intelligent Englishwoman told me, you heard every variety of slovenly accent in the exclusive English club and an excellent standard English in the native one.

That absurd phrase: "The unchanging East." It is the British predominant class who will not change.

I had imagined that non-co-operation was a device of Gandhi's, but it seems to be an established British method. The ignorant censorship of books and the fussy suppression of seditious papers and speakers which occur in Australia and England attain an exaggerated importance in India; and are almost the only indication that the British Raj is aware of the possibilities of Indian mental activity.

I also abandoned my "Pukka" status at Colombo and dined in a charming Cingalese home where I met well-read men, Ministers of the



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Island Government and their wives, very lovely in saris. I had not heard such good English talk or such good English spoken since I left London.

Here again was a fragment of that greater English-speaking network which obviously wants now to be gathered up into one world defence of freedom and progressive modern civilisation.

But the British Empire is still only democratic in pretence. It is, in actual fact, a timid yet greedy governing class, clamped upon possibilities far greater than itself. It shelters from criticism under an absurd parade of emotional loyalty to the Crown. More and more does it betray its quality of treachery to those who trust it, and its ready subservience to violence. It monopolises the key positions in the State, sustained by the faltering confidence of the trustful and mis-educated common people. Like the good ship "Pukka Sahib", it pursues its belated way long after it should have been scrapped.

When we talk of the Imperial Government taking part in the coming struggle for Democracy, either we are talking nonsense or we mean something entirely more comprehensive and creative than the preservation of this no doubt once worthy but now entirely superannuated vessel, for which we have already sacrificed Prague, Spain and our national honour.

## CHAPTER II

### A FORECAST OF 1939 \*

I HAVE been asked to write a Forecast of the Coming Year and here it is. Let me be perfectly frank about what this Forecast amounts to. I know no more than you do about what is coming. I have no magic crystal. All this sort of thing is guessing; an estimate of trends and possibilities. And moreover, because of certain complications in the journalistic life, this particular Forecast has to be written and passed for press not on New Year's Eve but a month earlier. Next year means a very speedy disproof or confirmation. It is much pleasanter to prophesy at long range. Then the prophetic welsher may even hope to get to an honoured grave before he is exposed. Nevertheless the present situation of the world is so extraordinary and so urgent that, even at the risk of almost immediate deflation, the temptation to blow up one's bladder of expectation and send it afloat on the breeze is irresistible.

History varies very widely from period to period in the breadth and quality of its flow. Some

\* *News Chronicle*, Jan. 2nd and 6th, 1939, and *Cosmopolitan*.

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phases are like the broad flooding of some great river. They are movements *en masse*, and it is inconceivable that any single human being or groups of human beings should be able to obstruct or deflect them. Such for example was the westward streaming of the American people in the nineteenth century. Nobody in particular led it; it depended on nobody; it was essentially impersonal. Its course could be predicted for years ahead with very considerable certitude. On the other hand there are times when circumstances conspire to concentrate power and decision in the hands of a few uncontrolled individuals, and then history becomes dramatic and incalculable. This is conspicuously the case at the present time. The immediate fate of hundreds of millions of people hangs upon the unchecked impulses of a mere handful of men. You could pack the whole lot of them into an ordinary aeroplane. It would be a tumultuous load but, if you could contrive a crash for it, the alleviation of human trouble would be disproportionately vast. Things are at such a pitch that the death or effective displacement of one or two individuals now would alter the whole tenor of human affairs.

Let me try to get down to the bare elements of the situation and look for any definite drive we can find in them.

The German people are an orderly, vain, deeply sentimental and rather insensitive people. They

seem to feel at their best when they are singing in chorus, saluting or obeying orders. Obeying orders is their ruling passion. The more raucous the voice and the harsher and more irrational the order, the stiffer their salutes and the grimmer their gusto. They are now obeying the orders of a triumvirate of certifiable lunatics and, according to the trustworthy evidence of that sympathetic observer Enid Bagnold, they have never glowed with a deeper contentment. I write of the triumvirate with the freedom of a still uninterned Englishman. My friend, Mr. Winston Churchill, has spoken of Mr. Hitler as a "great man". I agree, but I insist that he and his chief friends ought now to be rendered harmless and put away as soon as possible. I appeal to his open record, his published speeches, his rôle in the present pogrom, to establish the fact that he and his two friends are suffering from delusions of grandeur and a contagious form of homicidal mania. Possibly they may fall out with each other. Possibly some daring group may take the risk of a second "blood bath", and succeed. If and when these three go, Europe may be confronted with a renascent and probably reasonable Germany. But all this belongs to a world beyond my ken; I have no idea of what forces there are within Germany to relieve that country of its present obsession. The Nazi position last summer was plainly a very precarious one, until Mr. Chamber-

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lain, to the infinite astonishment of the world, reinstated it. Now, save for the possibilities of a striking accident, the great Nazi riot may continue to challenge and perplex the reluctant human mind for some years.

But the prospects of extensive changes in the world outside Germany are much more considerable. The reaction to Mr. Chamberlain's disastrous antics is gathering force in Great Britain steadily, continually, with the effect of a permanent national awakening. It is a commonplace now to say that the Quai d'Orsay and Westminster created Nazi Germany. In a year or so we may be saying that Hitler has created a new Radical Britain. It is remarkable and, to Mr. Chamberlain's supporters, it may well be ominous, that at first the superficial effect of the surrender was public approval. There was no immediate convulsion of shame and disgust. All the government press, the cinemas and every publicity device were set to work to glorify the dismal stupidity of the Prime Minister's "peace". It seemed almost as though he would get away with it. Then it was remarked that people were hissing in the cinemas, a rather unusual thing in England, and further that they were hissing that foolishly self-satisfied gentleman when he came out of an aeroplane or went off in a car to wait on the Dictator, or drove beside his conqueror, smirking and bowing, amidst alien applause (no Jews admitted).

The common people of England and America know very little of each other, they see only samples of each other's leisure class, and they have no notion how much they resemble each other. They are shrewd and kindly in their private lives, but they have a trustfulness amounting to laziness when their public interests are concerned. Criticism of people in authority makes them uncomfortable, and they will attend to it only after manifest discomfort and indignity. They dislike critics who "make trouble", who rob them of the feeling of security. Usually they elect their representatives inattentively and believe in them unreasonably, and turn back as soon as possible to their private affairs, and it is no wonder therefore that their rulers and administrators take great liberties with their collective property and interests.

The essential political history of both main sections of the English-speaking peoples for the last century and a half, has been a struggle on the part of the common people to maintain some sort of control of their general interests against a governing class (in Britain) and governing interests (in America) which have bilked and starved public education, distorted public information, and turned the economic-financial life of the country into a profiteers' scramble. In both countries, in spite of superficial differences of style and method, the common man has been baffled and cheated, but never completely broken in.

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But, confronted with the headlong challenge of Hitler, the British ruling class was startled into self-betrayal. I have been living these last few months in close contact with the political life of Westminster, and I am absolutely convinced that the Chamberlainites did not want even to risk war with the Nazis—not because they believed Hitler would emerge victorious, but because they were certain he would be overthrown. At a price. It would have been a rapid, frightful and scandal-producing war. It would have left Great Britain raw, smarting and indignant, with profiteering and the organised inefficiency of its fighting forces fully exposed. France also would have emerged in an awakened and resentful mood. We should have been in reluctant alliance with Russia, where high finance at any rate is under control, and emancipated Germany would have been unmasked as a fundamentally revolutionary Power. The City and West End of London, the English gentlefolks, hitherto imperialist flag-waggers of the extreme type, confronted with the alternative of a mean and shameful peace or the grave menace of world reconstruction, did not hesitate for a moment. Their preference for their particular interests over the national honour and the future of the world, was shameless.

To enforce the Munich surrender, the British Government set about organising a public panic. If they imagined they were doing anything else,

then they are bigger fools and less knaves than I imagine. The facts lie bare. Quite suddenly John Bull found himself being shouted at with loud speakers, raided by uniformed officials, blockaded by sand-bags, clapped into gas masks and encumbered in his daily movement by great multitudes of women and children already in flight from their London homes to carelessly selected refuges, without adequate water, food supply or medical attendance. He will never get a list of the casualties of that fantastic exodus, but the bill is coming in and he is beginning to realise that for that money he could have bombed Berlin to dust. His comment was exactly the comment his Cousin Jonathan would have made under the same circumstances. He said, and he is still saying with a rising inflection, "What the *Hell?*"

He discovered that at the mere bluff of a couple of thousand planes or so over London he was expected to scamper, burrow like a rabbit and squeal for mercy. Slowly he is realising what sort of figure he has been made to cut in this world of men.

He is sitting up. He is taking notice. He is asking questions. He has been fed with the story that he is the brave, wise master of a great Empire, and now he asks, "What have you been doing with this Empire of mine?"

The ruling class spends sleepless nights now



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inventing pacifying answers to such questions. Never have I known such a searching of hearts. British political life is at sixes and sevens, and every established party boundary is breaking down. A strong contingent of the Conservative Party, which took its Imperialism seriously, is in open revolt. Still more politicians are in a state of neurasthenia, trying to balance on a fence—which becomes more and more like a knife edge. Except for Mr. Chamberlain—who, I suppose, will be subjected to the British equivalent for what the Russians call “liquidation”, and go to the House of Lords—anyone in politics may turn up anywhere next year, and all sorts of new blood will be coming in. It seems to me that this wave of Radicalism—probably a very patriotic Radicalism—must continue to rise and that, before we are halfway through 1939, it will sweep away the present British Government, and maybe much of the existing class and party government, for good and all. The politicians may attempt compromises and retreating actions, but this new drive is not just a little party “crisis” in the House. It is a popular awakening, and it is likely to accumulate force with resistance.\*

So first of all in my Forecast, I write down a British General Election and the return of a

\* Alas! I was too hopeful. H. G. W. ten months later.

Radical government—not a Labour government but a nationalist government drawn from what is called the Left, but including also a considerable contingent of young “efficiency” Tories and competent “outsiders”. And next I see, associated with that, a new and strenuous attempt to get the political life of all the English-speaking states and dominions into line. They are all feeling the chill of the great renunciation. In South Africa there may be an attempt to supplement the imperial bond, such as it is, with a liaison with what is left of German culture, with the introduction of German in the schools as a third language, for example, to the Taal and English, and Australia and Canada may throw out political feelers towards the United States. Unless events are accelerated, I doubt if all this will amount to anything more than experimental kite-flying in 1939.

When I write of the British and Americans getting together, the last thing I have in mind is the approaching Royal Visit to America. Unless grave trouble arises between competitive hostesses or over-eager society correspondents, no harm—except for a certain diversion of the front page and the public mind from graver matters—is likely to arise from it. But on the other hand the British and American peoples must realise that these civilities between the heads of States have very little real significance, even from the international

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### "VIOLENT EXPLOSION IN THE SUNDAY DISPATCH

#### "H. G. WELLS INSULTS THE KING AND QUEEN

"H. G. Wells Says This About Our King and Queen:—

*" ' When I write of the British and Americans getting together, the last thing I have in mind is the approaching Royal visit to America.*

*" ' Unless grave trouble arises between competitive hostesses or over-eager society correspondents, no harm—except for a certain diversion of the front page and the public mind from graver matters—is likely to arise from it.*

*" ' But on the other hand the British and American peoples must realise that these civilities between the heads of States have very little real significance, even from the international point of view.*

*" ' These young people are, I believe, a very charming couple, constantly smiling and bowing, but they mean absolutely nothing in the problems of to-day.*

*" ' For a couple of centuries the British Royal Family has had no relationship whatever to the thought, literature, art, science and education of our community, and its interventions in military and clerical promotions and political life have been of very questionable value.'*

"He says it in the *News Chronicle*, in the second of two articles entitled '1939—What Does It Hold?'

"To begin with, it holds the complete disgust of

every true Briton for the fingers-to-nose impertinence of Mr. Wells.

"At the end of the article, Mr. Wells, or the newspaper, says: 'Reproduction in part or whole prohibited.'

"We are NOT going to be 'warned off'.

"An insult to the King and Queen IS our business.

"Mr. Wells, for a long time, has had the reputation of being our most ardent Republican--at least among those who habitually wear collars and ties and speak the King's English (or write it for big money).

"This is a free country and he is entitled to his views. He is NOT entitled to express them in such a way as to give deep offence to every true Briton.

"Mr. Wells apparently does not go to the cinemas and hear the round after round of applause that greets a 'shot' of our hard-working King and Queen in any of their amazingly numerous public appearances.

"The cheers of the people, Mr. Wells apparently thinks, are entirely due to the fact that these 'young people are constantly bowing and smiling'.

"The *Sunday Dispatch* invites Mr. Wells to get up in any cinema audience on such an occasion and say so.

"And he can choose his own audience--in the most Socialist district he can find.

"This is not the first time he has over-stepped

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the mark. Even the Liberal Summer School at Oxford in 1932 received this impudence to King George V in silence:—

“ ‘ *The King was so ill-advised as to depart from his proper political and social neutrality, and lead the movement for cheese-paring and grinding the faces of the needy in the interests of the debt collector, and not a soul in the Labour Party said what ought to have been said about the King, or that miserable campaign of unintelligent economy which cast its dismal shadow over the closing months of 1931.* ’

“ Perhaps some of them remembered what Mr. Wells had written on the Coronation of that same King in 1911:—

“ ‘ *There is a conviction widespread among us that King George is inspired, as no recent predecessor has been inspired, by the conception of kingship, that his is to be no role of almost indifferent abstinence from the broad process of our national and imperial development. . . .* ’

“ What DOES Mr. Wells want?

“ The author of the ‘Outline of History’ obviously needs a little instruction in the more recent story of his own country.

“ He can go out into the street, stop any secondary schoolboy, who will be pleased to tell him some of the big things our recent Sovereigns have done for their country :—

“ Even Mr. Wells cannot ignore the ‘Four-Days Miracle’, when King Edward VII, against the

advice of his Ministers—went to Paris and in some 96 hours converted a hostile France into a firm friend of Britain—a friendship that still lasts, and today is the most important factor in international politics.

“The schoolboy will be able to tell him how earlier, in 1875, King Edward went to India, saw the Princes, and ensured that Queen Victoria should take the title of Empress without opposition.

“The fathers of the present Lancashire cotton merchants would have LIKED to tell Mr. Wells what value that had.

“The record of King George V will not please the ‘reason’ of Mr. Wells.

“His work for Irish peace, for the formation of the National Government, to name just two items, throws the lie back into Mr. Wells’s teeth.

“Mr. Wells apparently does not read newspapers except when they contain articles by H. G. Wells—but he would not need to go far back to find headlines about ‘Britain’s Commercial Traveller No. 1’.

“He was King Edward VIII, Mr. Wells. On one occasion, as a result of an interview he had at Rio de Janeiro, Britain secured a £3,000,000 contract for the electrification of a Brazilian railway.

“Mr. Wells apparently does not attach much importance to the great influence for good that our present King and Queen exercise on the behaviour of this country, but they *do* symbolise the

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ideal of sane, clean, family life, the ideal cherished by every British man and woman.

"The *Sunday Dispatch* is not so presumptuous as Mr. Wells, so it will not examine the record of the King and Queen.

"BUT HE CAN STILL ASK A SCHOOLBOY.

"Nobody will deny Mr. Wells HIS record of genius and industry in literature.

"It is a pity he must mar it by unpleasant outbursts which show more petulance than good sense.

"The *Sunday Dispatch* invites him to withdraw this one."

To this and several similar replies I answered with the following article, which I have found impossible to print in any British or American periodical. Which only shows what a necessary article it was.

#### DISCUSSING ROYALTY

I returned to my Bali hotel after a desperate and finally unsuccessful attempt to cable an article to London from the Bali post office.

Among other complications the only available operator was a Balinese gentleman unfamiliar with English script. I was extremely loth to sacrifice the picturesque possibilities of his transmission, but wiser counsels prevailed and that particular article reached London belatedly from Singapore.

I found fresh mail awaiting me at the hotel bureau. I was astonished to learn from my Lord Winterton and the Rothermere press that I had "insulted" the King.

I had written that the approaching royal visit to Washington was not really a matter of primary importance in building up those closer understandings between dispersed sections of the English speaking democracies, which alone seem to offer any hope for freedom and a common law in the world. It was not to be regarded as a substitute for a real and long overdue *éclaircissement* between the democracies.

Whereupon these champions of Royalty lifted up their voices, my Lord Winterton in a surprisingly puerile tenor and the Rothermere press more in the timbre of an organ. There was also an alto solo from young Master Wood, the son of Lord Halifax, to assure me that the heart of the fifth form is still in the right place, properly furnished with the same good old Anglican stuff its fathers had before it. I wiped my Bali-wet brow, because I would hate to insult our young King. Still, in view of one or two things that have happened since in America, the interest of these outcries is even greater than it was a month ago. They furnish a convenient peg on which to hang a few friendly but frank comments on the position of "democratic" monarchies at the present time.

Holland, Belgium and the Scandinavian Powers



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are in much the same position as ourselves; and the role their courts may play in either helping or hindering the consolidation of one liberal order in the world, a consolidation which alone seems likely to save us from a cycle of planetary violence and retrocession, is very considerable.

If I were a member of the Royal Family it is doubtful if I should feel grateful to these self-constituted vindicators. My Lord Winterton's and Master Wood's attacks were a mere unmannerly yap at myself for having grown up; but the Harmsworth assault was a more copious and characteristic instance of a contemporary tendency to drag the Crown back into current politics, and to exploit the affectionate loyalty of the common people in the interests of just those isolationist monopolisations, that have brought British affairs to their present indignity. The theory of the British constitution is against any sort of royal intervention in public affairs, and there can be nothing worse for crowns and peoples alike at the present time than any suspicion of meddling with foreign relations in exalted quarters. Is there any basis for the idea that this regal aloofness is being disregarded?

I have never been able to determine whether the political convolutions of the Harmsworth press, since the days when it bade us take off our hats to France to now, when it would have us strip off practically everything to Germany, do not contain

a certain element of whimsical burlesque. Deep down within the Harmsworth soul I suspect a well of fun, so profound as to be almost unconscious. I glimpsed it once or twice in Northcliffe. At any rate it is open to question whether the apologetics in the *Sunday Dispatch* aimed most at defending or discrediting the monarchy. For example, it tells a jumbled story of some commercial touting in the Argentine on the part of Edward the Eighth, when Prince of Wales. It seems he landed orders to the extent of over three millions for Great Britain—which is about half the price of a battleship. I find it hard to believe anything so ridiculous. If that is the sort of use Kingship is put to by Britain, the sooner we clean up Kingship the better. Englishmen like myself, who follow the high republican and intensely English tradition of Cromwell, Milton, George Washington and so forth, will have to intervene to save not only the kingly idea but also the reputation of British goods for selling on quality rather than personal charm, from the unseemly grossness of such vindicators.

The consolidation of world opinion that would arrest the present drift of human affairs towards catastrophe, does depend and can only depend upon strengthening intellectual ties and the development of conceptions of world law and world organisation quite outside the reach of the admirable, well-meaning but humanly limited

British monarchy. That consolidation of liberal thought and liberal forces is a huge and complicated task which demands the full loyalty and devotion of every reasonable being, kings and queens included. The Royal Family has not had the training for leadership in this sort of work; it has not the gifts for this sort of work; it is not in its tradition; and it is not my fault but the faults of people of the Rothermere faction, if this has to be said quite bluntly now. In America this Royal Visit will be regarded not as a demonstration of English-speaking solidarity but as a piece of British monarchist propaganda.

We hear such charges against the Crown too often. It is desirable that they should be brought into the open and denied. We do not want to think that the present King shares the anti-Red nightmares and the anti-Red activities of Lord Rothermere. I find the case against the intervention of the Crown in politics set out very explicitly in Mr. Hugh Ross Williamson's able book *Who is for Liberty?* He does not implicate the present monarch, but I should be happier if this dodging about between intervention and sacred irresponsibility could be cleared up.

It is urgent now to get English-speaking people together throughout the world; and in Southern Ireland, in South Africa and in large parts of the United States the monarchy has little magic in men's minds. The manifest role of monarchy in

modern world-wide democracy is to become mediatised; and I see no reason why that destiny should not be accepted and assisted generously and gracefully by a patriot King. It is not my sort of writer who endangers the Royal Family; it is the Rowdy Royalists who will make the Crown impossible.

Both the Dutch system and the Scandinavian democracies carry sentimental monarchies closely parallel to the British. A certain mascot flavour hangs about all of them, entirely harmless and amiable if it is not exaggerated into a sacred mystery. Unhappily the small dissensions and domesticities of the Royal Family are used to fill up our newspapers with twaddle, and to distract the minds of our people from the more serious matters that demand their attention.

When I was dining in Bali the other day, the radio broke into an air unfamiliar to me, but manifestly the Dutch national anthem. Whereupon we desisted from our meal and rose stiffly, just as in England. Everyone stood rigidly to attention with the same expression of exalted and stern vacuity. But there were several verses of this tune and some queer little questions began to wriggle about in my mind. I found myself asking whether anyone had the right to stand up so importantly on this occasion.

What does one assert by standing up to these royal anthems? Is one not claiming to be an

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active part in something great, wonderful, significant and supreme? Has one the right to stand up if one is not brimming over with personal devotion to the monarch? Or is one, by this act, indulging in an ecstatic evasion of thought and of any self-examination in political responsibility? Do we really stand up to glorify the monarch or do we stand to assert our indifference to reconstructive effort, to the troublesome riddles of science and to the stern urgency of the problems of freedom and order that face us? Do we take something on or throw something off? For when one thinks of the things a man might and should stand up to! . . .

As I stood thinking these intriguing thoughts, I discovered that the music had ceased, the company was relaxing and I was the last man up. With expressions of edification and relief we resumed our platters. No need to bother any more about our duty to ourselves and the world or any such radical nonsense. We had done the gentlemanly thing. We had honoured the Royal Anthem and we were absolved.

### CHAPTER III

## MR. LYONS PROTECTS HITLER, THE HEAD OF A GREAT FRIENDLY POWER, FROM MY "INSULTS" \*

THAT very typical British politician, albeit hailing from Tasmania, Mr. Lyons, the Australian Prime Minister, has entangled himself in a trivial but very illuminating dispute with the present writer. Sometimes a chance gesture can do more than an elaborate statement to reveal both ideology and mental disposition; and Mr. Lyons has laid himself bare, artlessly and completely, as all that is most indecisive, disingenuous and dangerous in the present leadership of the British Communities.

He is, so to speak, an ultra-Chamberlainite. He presents the complete, rounded-off, hand-made specimen of everything that is hampering the development of a valiant, generous and progressive policy common to the English-speaking and democratic communities throughout the world.

Probably the most disastrous thing that ever happened in the British system was the conversion of Joseph Chamberlain to the fantasy of a tariff

\* *News Chronicle*, Jan. 23rd, 1939.

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ring round the British Empire. There was a sort of malign genius in the idea. It was the basest inspiration that ever appealed to the quick-profit-seeking elements in our individualistic British community.

Before that time the British Empire had justifiable pretensions to grandeur. It spread like a frank and friendly hand to all the world. No doubt it had many hypocrisies and weaknesses. Chadband was a part of it; and the Dedlock family: nevertheless, the honest Liberal could believe in it and its mission. But the first of our unfortunate sequence of Chamberlains altered all that. He had the mentality of a monopoly-seeking merchant. He viewed the world from a corner in ironmongery. He saw the world not in terms of humanity but in terms of preferential trading. He launched this mean and insidious idea of "Isolation", which is a disease enfeebling and endangering the whole English-speaking world today.

"Leave us to our advantages," say the British Isolationists, "and do what you will outside our fence".

And the American and Dominion Isolationists echo this idea.

The dominant issue in world politics today is between this mean and now impossible Isolationist conception of the nation and the Empire, on the one hand, tribute-exacting or tribute-paying,

according to strength; and a realisation that the whole world has become one, on the other.

One may call this idea of the world as one community modern. Modern, in the sense that only in the present century has it become first practicable and then urgently necessary. As a fundamental aspiration it is at least as old as Buddhism and Christianity.

But in the past the difficulties of intercommunication were sufficient to prevent the realisation of that great dream of human brotherhood; and to obstruct the consolidation of universal aspirations there was either the Pax Romana, Islam or the westward advance of the Mongols.

Now the situation is absolutely reversed. What happens in Russia, Germany or South Carolina is as much the concern of the Englishman as what happens in Cardiff or Nairobi.

Armament for aggression, organised cruelty, mental or physical infection, gathering strength outside our boundaries, makes the idea of isolation ridiculous.

I find myself compelled to consider Germans as much my fellow world-citizens as Australians or Londoners. I insist that I have as much right to discuss the mentality of the German leader as Germans have to discuss the mentality of Chamberlain, our King or President Roosevelt.

I have not only the right, but, under the democratic tradition still prevalent in all English-



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speaking communities, the freedom to do so. I am able to discuss things that scores of thousands of my fellow world-citizens in Germany are debarred from discussing.

I insist that the average German is a first-rate human being, caught in a diplomatic cleft stick, and I will not have him blamed and penalised for the political misfortunes that have handed him over, gagged and helpless, to the present fantastic leadership.

After 1914 I did my utmost to maintain that the war was war against the Hohenzollerns and their militant ideas, and was not against the German common folk. But the baser elements among the victors were all for making Germany pay. Now again it is not the masses of the belligerent countries that want a second world-war.

One redeeming feature of Chamberlain's policy is the opportunity given to the common people of Germany and Italy to express their passionate craving for peace. And a study of the ravings and delusions of Hitler, a dissection of *Mein Kampf*, a discussion of the problem how to cure Nazi obsessions, is not simply of interest, but is the duty of all civilised intelligences.

I said this in conversation with the journalists of Perth. I hazarded the opinion that in view of Hitler's racial hallucinations and treatment of the Jews, his trend towards sentimentalised sadistic behaviour justified me in regarding him as a

“certifiable lunatic”. In saying that I was merely repeating what I had already said in my earlier forecast for 1939 in the *News Chronicle*.

It is hopeless to think of any permanent understanding with the German people unless we express freely and frankly what must be the secret persuasion of the majority of intelligent Germans. They will only think us time-servers and humbugs if we pretend to rationalise Hitler's vagaries.

And this is where our all-too-British Mr. Lyons comes in. There was no occasion for him to notice these unofficial remarks, but newshawks and the hot weather were too much for him. “Prime Minister rebukes H. G. Wells” appeared on placards and in headlines. I had insulted the Head of a friendly state. It might annoy him, and then where should we all be?

Lyons lives in a world where states appear to have Heads without either brains or bodies. I said little in reply, except to say that a Prime Minister had as much right to express opinions as anyone else; whereupon he went in deeper, and declared that the opinions of the Commonwealth Government were absolutely opposed to mine.

Australia, thereupon, began to express itself with a force, freedom and abundance about the issue, which must have made disagreeable hearing and reading for him.

I realised I had come into a country where the question of the suppression of opinion is even more

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acute than at home. Lyons, like Chamberlain, manifestly suffers from delusions of sagacity, and thinks that by winks, nods and secret talks, isolationist bargains are to be made. Miracle workers are not to be insulted by enquiries or embarrassed by comments until the job is done.

Lyons, like Reith at home, embodies an instinctive, disingenuous and largely self-protective resistance to any recognition of the vast changes now at work in human life. They do not want to crush people: they want to paralyse them. They want reality hushed up. They want things done unobtrusively by people with a pull, and the less said about it the better. They are fundamentally inspired by a fear of life. In Australia, as in Britain, the struggle is not simply *between* minds, but *in* them, to suppress everything outspoken and fearless.

Suppression neither begins nor ends with Mr. Lyons. It is like a malaise all over Australian public affairs. He is only a self-projected sample. The Australian Broadcasting Commission is less degraded on the whole than the B.B.C., that is one up for Australia, but much the same petty bullying of street-corner orators, pickets and strikers is encouraged as at home. Immigration restrictions are stretched scandalously to keep out that bogey of the furtive isolationist, the "Foreign Agitator". I am told that free expression is hampered by the

commercialisation of the press and by the concentration of ownership in a few hands.

Where petty intolerance shows in its most stupid and objectionable traits is at the customs. A barrier of illiterate policemen and officials stands between the tender Australian mind and what they imagine to be subversive literature. A. P. Herbert's *Holy Deadlock*, for example, is obscene by these standards.

The Australian workers' attempts to express themselves in matters of foreign policy are perpetually hampered. While the Government openly discusses the economic boycott of Japan, stern measures are threatened against the Port Kemble wharfingers for their refusal to load scrap iron for that country. This particular struggle is likely to spread and become complicated by the conscription issue. As at home, the air-war scare is being used to clap people into uniforms and to subject them to military discipline. . . .

It is a pleasant thing to be without a past or a future in Australia, and so free to make these liberating observations. I repeated them wherever I could, and every repetition produced an impassioned fan mail in response. It is all so like Britain; there is the same living spirit of freedom, mysteriously stifled and frustrated, not by a simple organised tyranny, but a complex of obscurantisms.

## CHAPTER IV

### BUSH FIRES \*

THE Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science which assembled at Canberra experienced a record heat wave and drought and learnt much more than it ever expected to do about bush fires.

The younger men of science went off firefighting. The fires came down before a strong north wind. A broadening bank of smoke across the sky made the sun a sullen red disc. The pitiless breeze came like gusts from a furnace. The temperature mounted to 108. Melbourne was recording a night temperature of 114.

The fires became at last such a preoccupation that there was nothing for it but to go up wind to the bases of that streaming smoke curtain and see the actual burning oneself. I went with the Governor-General, who was anxious to find out what help could be given to the threatened homesteads and what supplies he could furnish the firefighters. My expectations were of the crudest sort; just as our imaginations of the coming war are of the crudest sort.

\* *News Chronicle*, Jan. 30th, 1939.

I anticipated an advancing wall of flames, leaving blackness behind, being held back by natural and artificial clearings, by beating and by water. The reality was not like that at all. A bush fire is not an orderly invader, but a guerilla. It advances by rushes, by little venomous tongues of fire in the grass; it spreads by sparks burning leaves and bark. Its front is miles deep. It is here, it is there, like a swarm of venomous wasps. It shams dead and stabs you in the back. It encircles you so that there is no sure line of flight for its threatened victims. It destroys bridges in your rear. It bars the road with blazing trees.

One homestead we visited was holding out like a fort besieged by Red Indians. A big haystack was burning steadily, incurably. One or two trees and fencing posts were alight and bound to burn for days with a full white light inside, flickering through cracks and culminating in a crown of flames. The gumtrees, once alight, burn within inextinguishably. Through knotholes you can see a flickering incandescence and at the crest a sort of spill over of fire. Each one is a possible centre of collapse and of fiery contagion.

The defenders were blackened, sweaty men with a curious tough Cockney cheerfulness and brotherliness. They had a water cart and watched and beat with sacks fastened, like flails, to the

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end of sticks at every resumption of attack by the incalculable flames upon the beleaguered home.

Their cattle and horses had been saved, but what had become of the thousands of sheep no one knew. They might have been caught in the paddock or they might have strayed to some area of safety. The saved beasts stood about weary and in discomfort, resigned, and apathetic as only a domesticated beast can be.

This was a sample of what had happened in vast areas of Victoria and New South Wales. Many homesteads had not had the blistered good fortune of this one. Over a hundred people, including many children, had been caught and chased about, overcome and burnt alive.

The destruction of stock and timber has been enormous but still Australia remains indifferent to the waste of its magnificent timber, though it takes half a century to restore the natural Australian forest. Most of the country I had passed through between Adelaide and Melbourne—the Otway Ranges for example—was recklessly devastated. First there were mountainsides of ghostly ringbarked trees still standing, then wildernesses of scorched stumps, broken up by abandoned clearings.

There was a certain exhilarating risk in motor-ing through the fire zones. The way might be blocked by fallen trees, bridges might have

collapsed and always there was the possibility of the roof of the car lighting up from a flying twig or spark.

The thing to note, in a war-threatened world, is that for Australians, as for people at home, this sort of thing exhilarates. Everybody we met was dirty, hungry, thirsty, fraternal and quickened. Bush fires eliminate class and feuds. There was a great sending off of drink and food to the fire watchers and fighters before we ate at Government House.

That night our talk ran first of all upon the defence of Australia from fire. Plans for refuge areas and air patrols were discussed. Once a system of bush fires is established nothing can end the spreading disaster but a change of wind to the south and rain. Apart from that natural relief, the only effective method of restraining bush fires is to locate their beginnings and go out to meet them. Here, as in most human affairs, aggressive prevention is the best defence. Even as we talked the weather was changing. Presently the smoke pall was lifted and we saw the stars and in a night the thermometer fell more than 40 degrees. But at one time it seemed that that could never happen and indeed it might not have happened. The burning might have gone on for weeks.

From fire defence our talk spread to the question of the defence of Australia against a hostile attack. The idea of a systematic incendiary attack upon



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bush and forest in hot weather naturally occurred to us. As a supplement to the bombing of towns, trained to panic evacuation, it has hitherto received little attention in military planning, but it is obviously full of grim possibilities not only for Australia but for any other well-wooded country.

As another objection to reliance on the alarmed-rabbit policy (A.R.P.) of bolt or bury yourself it has considerable validity. From that I found my thoughts running to the whole question of Australian defence. The plain truth of the case is that Australia is absolutely defenceless against competent raider attacks, because of its sprawling extension. It exaggerates the general position of the British Empire in this respect.

The great Australian harbour-city states stand by themselves in relatively green fertile regions, isolated from one another by enormous land distances, barren scrub and desert, and are absolutely incapable of sending effective aid to each other overland. Their desiccated, thinly populated hinterlands afford no possibilities of retreat or reinforcement against air or sea raids. Perth, Adelaide or Brisbane could be wrecked or even occupied, while Sydney or Melbourne looked on incapable of help; for purposes of mere defence they carry isolation to its logical consequences. Like these scorched homesteads we visited, their real and effective protection lies in going to the

source of the evil and beating it out there in time.

The most effective defence for Australia is a powerful air force, capable of bold offensive and stationed along the northern sphere of influence, coupled with a policy of propaganda assimilation in close association not only with the rest of the Empire but with the Americans and the Dutch.

This principle of an associated aggressive defensive applies to each and every democratic system scattered around the world. Our kindred freedoms cannot wait to be assailed and destroyed in detail, one after another. If criminal belligerence is blazing and spreading and liberty being destroyed in the schools and homes of Osaka, Pekin, Bremen or Odessa, we cannot afford to wait under the wind of modern conditions until the fire reaches the political ring fence of our own holdings.

Mental conflagration and devastation beyond our borders are as much our concern now as the maintenance and invigoration of education and the understanding of freedom at home. Australia awakens slowly to the need for defence measures, and there is a considerable risk that she may adopt a cowering policy that discredits the home country at the present time.

I think she can trust the natural valiance of her people. Her best, her only possible defence is to

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**have such bombers and fighters as are capable of striking effective blows at the eastern centres of these bush fires of aggression and brutality, which have already devastated Spain and Eastern China and which threaten all the world until they are extinguished.**

## CHAPTER V

### THE FUTURE OF THE JEWS \*

I MET a Jewish friend of mine the other day and he asked me, "What is going to happen to the Jews?" I told him I had rather he had asked me a different question, "What is going to happen to mankind?"

"But *my* people——" he began.

"That," said I, "is exactly what is the matter with them."

When I was a schoolboy in a London suburb I never heard of the "Jewish Question". I realised later that I had Jewish and semi-Jewish school-fellows, but not at the time. They were all one to me. The Jews, I thought, were people in the Bible, and that was that. I think it was my friend Walter Low who first suggested that I was behaving badly to a persecuted race. Walter, like myself, was a University crammer and a journalist competing on precisely equal terms with myself. One elder brother of his was editor of the *St. James's Gazette* and another was *The Times* correspondent in Washington and both were subsequently knighted. Later a daughter of

\* *Liberty* and *Sunday Chronicle*, Dec. 1938.

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Walter's was to marry Litvinov, who became the Russian Foreign Minister. I could not see that they were at any disadvantage whatever in England. Nevertheless Walter held on to the idea that he was treated as an outcast, and presently along came Zangwill in a state of racial championship, exacerbating this idea that I was responsible for the Egyptian and Babylonian captivities, the destruction of Jerusalem, the ghettos, auto-da-fés—and generally what was I going to do about it?

My disposition was all for letting bygones be bygones.

When the war came in 1914 some of us were trying to impose upon it the idea that it was a War to End War, that if we could make ourselves heard sufficiently we might emerge from that convulsion with some sort of World Pax, a clean-up of the old order, and a fresh start for the economic life of mankind as a whole. No doubt we were very ridiculous to hope for anything of the sort, and through the twenty years of fatuity that have followed the Armistice, the gifted young have kept up a chorus of happy derision, "War to End War Ya ha!" In the last year or so that chorus has died down—almost as if the gifted young had noticed something. But throughout those tragic and almost fruitless four years of war, Zangwill and the Jewish spokesmen were most elaborately and energetically demonstrating that they cared not a rap for the troubles and

dangers of English, French, Germans, Russians, Americans or of any other people but their own. They kept their eyes steadfastly upon the restoration of the Jews—and what was worse in the long run, they kept the Gentiles acutely aware of this

The Zionist movement was a resounding advertisement to all the world of the inassimilable spirit of the more audible Jews. In England, where there has been no social, political or economic discrimination against the Jews for several generations, there is a growing irritation at the killing and wounding of British soldiers and Arabs in pitched battles fought because of this Zionist idea. It seems to our common people an irrelevance, before the formidable issues they have to face on their own account. They are beginning to feel that if they are to be history-ridden to the extent of restoring a Jewish state that was extinguished nearly two thousand years ago, they might just as well go back another thousand years and sacrifice their sons to restore the Canaanites and Philistines who possessed the land before the original Jewish conquest.

It is very unwillingly that I make this mild recognition of a certain national egotism the Jews as a people display, because I am acutely sensible of the misery and suffering to which great numbers of them are being subjected in many parts of the world. But it is fundamental to the Jewish question that they do remain a peculiar people in

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the French- and English-speaking communities largely by their own free choice, because they are history-ridden and because they are haunted by a persuasion that they are a chosen people with distinctive privileges over their Gentile fellow-creatures.

I know that the situation is hardening against them. In the days of my boyhood it was possible for an Englishman or a Frenchman or an American to answer the Jewish Question with one word, "Assimilate". We would declare we had no objection. Wasn't our civilisation good enough for anyone? As Joseph Choate said to me on my first visit to America in 1906, in regard to the flood of immigration, "Let 'em all come". Why keep up this separateness?

But we can say that no longer. Life has very suddenly and swiftly taken on a grimmer face. It has taken on a grimmer face to everyone, but more immediately towards the Jew. The doors to assimilation are being slammed upon him. He is being driven out of countries where he had seemed to be secure. He is no longer free to escape to the countries which tolerate his kind. They too limit immigration now or bar it altogether. He is threatened very plainly with a systematic attempt to exterminate him—and to exterminate him brutally and cruelly.

Now this intensification of the Jewish problem is not, I repeat, a thing in itself. It is a part of a

swift and terrifying change which is coming over human affairs, and I do not believe it can be dealt with by itself or in any way except as a portion of the general human problem. The time has come for all sane men to sink their special differences in a universal effort.

The wisdom of our species was not enough to make the Great War of 1914-18 a "war to end war" or to achieve any solution of the economic difficulties that were pressing upon us. For two decades the Foreign Offices, the more they have changed the more they have remained the same thing. After 1918-19, they resumed the dear old game of conflicting sovereign Powers, with gusto. The financial and business worlds could think of nothing better than to snatch back economic life from the modified public control under which it had fallen. There was a certain cant of reconstruction and rationalisation, which was presently dropped.

Meanwhile a new generation of feverish young people without anything to look forward to, grew up, and science and invention continually produced potential weapons of increasing range and power. Mankind became materially one community while still entangled in the dwarfish politics of nationalism and imperialism. In every country the disillusioned young turned their faces towards violent remedies for the economic disorganisation that had robbed them



of hope. War rose again in uglier and more destructive guise. The Fatuous Twenties gave way to the Frightened Thirties, and foreshadowed the Fighting Forties. An immense dismay spread over the world. We live in that dismay.

So long as we are history-bound and stuck in our old patriotic traditions, we are going to live in that dismay. We are going to drift from war to war and each will be worse than the last.

The need for a strenuous intellectual effort, for a vast renaissance of education throughout the world, to raise the human mind and will up to a saner co-operation, is glaringly manifest. We cannot afford to waste any of our intellectual resources if that drift is to be arrested. Before all things we have to modernise. It is no good dreaming of raising human social and political life with the dear old principles of the horse and foot days. At present we are about as competent to handle these problems that confront us, as the chauffeur whose one idea of starting his engine was to say "Gee-up" to it. Many of us had counted on the active Jewish mentality and the network of Jewish understanding about the world for a substantial contribution to that immense mental task. Such greatly imaginative Jews as (greatest of all in my opinion) David Lubin, Disraeli, Marx and so forth, had given an earnest of the possibility of a self-forgetful race, "sprinkling many nations", and giving itself—

not altogether without recompense—to the service of mankind. We have been disappointed.

No people in the world have caught the fever of irrational nationalism that has been epidemic in the world since 1918, so badly as the Jews. They have intruded into an Arab country in a mood of intense racial exhibitionism. Instead of learning the language of their adopted country they have vamped up Hebrew. They have treated the inhabitants of Palestine practically as non-existent people, and yet these same Arabs are a people more purely Semitic than themselves. Nationalism, like a disease germ, begets itself, and they have blown up Lawrence's invention of Arab nationalism into a flame. They have added a new and increasing embarrassment to the troubles of the strained and possibly disintegrating British Empire.

In all these things the Jews have been doing nothing that any other people might not have done in the same circumstances—at the same level of history-ridden unenlightenment. They are not exceptional; they are typical. We are all being aggressive and different and difficult to each other. The Jews are not the only people who have been educated to believe themselves peculiar and chosen. The Germans, for example, have produced a very good parallel to Zionism in the Nordic theory. They too, it seems, are a chosen people. They too must keep themselves heroically pure. I believe that the current Nazi

gospel is actually and traceably the Old Testament turned inside out. It is one step from the Lutheran Church to the Brown House. When I was a boy I got a lot of the same sort of poison out of J. R. Green's *History of the English People* in the form of "Anglo-Saxonism". I know only too well the poisonous charm of such a phrase as Milton's "God's Englishman". Most history as it is and as it has been taught, is a poisonous stimulation of the latent possibilities of suspicion, hate, vanity and mob violence in the human make-up. The Jews are not so peculiar as they and many Gentiles suppose. But it looks as though the penalties of a cultivated racial egotism in a world where distances are being abolished and the tension of life is increasing frightfully, were going to hit them first and hardest. They are going to be hit much harder than they have ever been hit before.

We Gentiles, now and in the years ahead, are going to see, in the efforts and experiences of the Jews, a sort of selected and intensified anticipation of what is to follow for ourselves and our children. If Judaism is murdered and exterminated—and that is quite a probable thing now—it will be only the opening phase of an age of warfare, conquest and extermination. The turn of nation after nation will follow. That is how things must work out at the present level of our ideologies.

It is quite possible that the Jewish story will

end in forcible sterilisation and death. But there is no reason why it should do so. There is no reason at all in most of this belligerence, persecution, want and misery amidst which we choose to live. It might be stopped long before the Jews are overwhelmed. It is simple that we, as a species, lack the vigour to end this confusion. We cling to flattering lies, delusions, animosities, mean advantages. The accepted tradition of the Jews is largely nonsense. They are no more a "pure" race than the English or the Germans or the hundred per cent. Americans. There never was a "Promise"; they were never "Chosen"; their distinctive observances, their Sabbath, their Passover, their queer calendar, are mere traditional oddities of no present significance whatever. There is nothing to prevent their living in equal and happy intercourse with other equally civilised people, if only the world could get rid of an incubus of prejudicial mental matter. We need only a reasonable and possible elevation of the educational level of the world for the "Jewish Question" to vanish altogether.

The only way out from the present human catastrophe for Jew and Gentile alike, is a world-wide, conscious educational emancipation. In books, universities, colleges, schools, newspapers, plays, assemblies, we want incessant, ruthless truth-telling about these old legends that divide and antagonise and waste us. We want a great

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massacre of stale beliefs and ancient grievances and claims, if we are to avoid great massacres of human beings. There are thousands of Jewish writers, professors, philosophers, journalists, publishers, booksellers, film magnates, capitalists of every sort, who might contribute enormously more than they do now to the release and enlightenment of mankind—if only they would forget they are Jews and remember that they are men. The future of the Jews is like the future of the Irish, Scotch, Welsh, English, Germans and Russians, and that is common humanity in one large and varied world order, or death.

Here are some responses to the preceding article, which we have reprinted from *Liberty*.

“COLUMBUS, GA.—Thanks for the delightfully interesting article, *The Future of the Jews*, by H. G. Wells (December 24, *Liberty*). Due to the overwhelming mass of propaganda flooding this country, it's seldom that we obtain an intelligent and truthful version of the Jewish situation.

“The only salvation for the Jews must come from the Jews, and from the Jews alone. They must lose their identity! Assimilate! They must turn their Judaism into some kind of ethical or social religion. They must forget their ancient traditions—traditions that have been strangling them for generations. The Jew is just about as

## IN SEARCH OF HOT WATER

much 'chosen' as the rest of 'God's ~~chillen~~ and the quicker he becomes cognizant of the fact, the sooner will he be accepted by all as a desirable neighbor and friend.—*Dan Gillis.*

"NEW YORK NY

"ONE NEED NOT WAIT TO READ MRS ROOSEVELTS REPLY TO H G WELLS TO SAY HOW THOROUGHLY COCKEYED ARE HIS IDEAS AND OPINIONS OF HIS SUBJECT THE FUTURE OF THE JEWS I HAVE SELDOM READ A MORE INADEQUATE AND INACCURATE VIEW OF A TOPIC AS MR WELLS HAS WRITTEN FOR YOUR CURRENT ISSUE FOR A WRITER OF MR WELLS STATURE HE IS LAMENTABLY DISAPPOINTING ANY FAIRLY WELL INFORMED LAYMAN CAN COMPLETELY REFUTE AND DISPROVE ALMOST EVERY QUESTIONED SENTENCE MR H G WELLS SHOULD STICK TO WRITING NOVELS TO AVOID IMPAIRING HIS PROFESSIONAL REPUTATION  
—JOSEPH GLADSTONE

"SHREVEPORT, LA.—Mr. Wells has pointed out that as long as the Jews remain a separate group they cannot contribute to the progress of the nation in which they live. Surely he has not forgotten the Disraeli whom he himself mentions, and the great contribution he made to the development of the author's beloved Britain. Then there are the Heines, the Freuds, the Spinozas, the Einsteins, who have not only given to the culture and science of their adopted nations, but to the world.

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“The possible future of the Jews is, of course, a matter of conjecture; but I do not think—nor do I believe that Mr. Wells thinks—that a race which has created so much of the foundation work of modern society, which has contributed so much to the knowledge and beauty of the world, will be allowed to be stamped out by the intolerant might of tyranny.—*Bernard Schram, Managing Editor, the Jewish Journal.*

“NEW YORK NY

“H G WELLS SAYS BRITISH RESENT HAVING TO PROTECT JEWS AGAINST ARABS TRUTH IS THAT JEWISH SOLDIERS HEROICALLY DEFENDING BRITISH AS WELL AS GENERAL ARAB POPULATION AGAINST TERRORISTS WHO ARE PAID TO BE PATRIOTS BY GERMAN AND ITALIAN AGENTS—SAMUEL BLITZ

“PHILADELPHIA, PA.—May I thank *Liberty* and Mr. Wells for the firm and concise article that I know will be resented and misunderstood by a great many of my people.

“I would say to the Jews of America: My people, let's join our America full-heartedly and not by the back-door method of calling attention to our so-called Biblical superiority. Nationalism first, religion second. Put the shoulder that is under the 'chip' against the wheel of progress toward a better understanding based on personal ability and usefulness in the service of our country, God bless it.—*M. J. D.*

“ NEW YORK NY

“ JEWS WILL NOT BE DESTROYED BY VIOLENT ASSAULT OF HITLERISM NEITHER WILL THEY BE DESTROYED BY THOSE MEN LIKE WELLS WHO PREACH NAZISM IN THE GUISE OF VAGUE DREAMS OF UTOPIA—LOUIS RIMSKY

“ PATERSON, N. J.—Popular novelists as well as morons have the privilege of making stupid statements. If Mr. H. G. Wells would only think a little before he writes, he would observe that *it is not the Jews who make anti-Semitism but it is anti-Semitism that makes Jews*. If it weren't for persecution, the Jews would have disappeared hundreds of years ago.

“ These people have been trying to assimilate with their neighbors since the time of the great Greeks. Wherever and whenever Jews are allowed to live as equals they adopt the habits and customs of the majority, they intermarry and merge with the population. In Germany they became so Germanized that they completely forgot they were Jews until Hitler came along and reminded them of it.

“ If Mr. Wells is right, then Germany should have been the last place in the world for anti-Semitism to have arisen.—*Harold Brown*.

“ NEW YORK NY

“ H G WELLS BRAVELY KICKS A PEOPLE THAT IS DOWN



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PILING FRESH TINDER ON THE FIRES OF A RELENT-  
LESS ANTI SEMITISM—MENDEL FISHER

“NEW YORK NY

“H G WELLS IS BRAZENLY SPREADING NOTORIOUS LIES ABOUT THE JEWS HIS VIOLENT LANGUAGE BETRAYS A STREAK OF SADISM THAT IS REVOLTING IF ANY MAN WHO PROFFESSES TO BE AN ENLIGHTENED HUMAN BEING CAN PREACH SUCH HEINOUS DISTORTIONS THEN MANKIND IS DOOMED TO UTTER DARKNESS—LEON GELMAN PRESIDENT MIZRACHI ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA”

Mrs. Roosevelt also replied. Her article was headed *Mr. Wells is Wrong*, but I think that was an editorial enhancement. I do not know whether she had read my article—it is not the first time I have thought she might with advantage read more than she seems to do—but at any rate she said nothing that was not in complete agreement with it. Apparently she had been told that I had proposed a world pogrom or something of that sort.

She is not alone in her avoidance of reading. Take that man Schram, for example, a professional separatist, the Editor of the *Jewish Journal*, and note how he taunts me with my bias for my “beloved Britain” (Gollys!) and how he counts those Jews who abandoned orthodox Jewry for ever and who did ~~what~~ what I say every Jew

should do—that is, become citizens of the world, Disraeli, Spinoza, Freud (who has exploded the Moses legend), Einstein (who has just been counselling the Zionists to moderate their ardours in Palestine), as though they were all still wailing at the Wailing Wall. What *can* one do with these Schrams and Gelmans and Rimskys? It is a poor satisfaction to note how completely their crazy narrowness emphasises my criticisms. And these are not men in the back streets of a ghetto; they are official leaders in Israel. And were there no synagogues in Germany and Austria, Mr. Harold Brown?

## CHAPTER VI

### FRONTS WITH NO FORCE BEHIND THEM \*

I COME back to London to find political life in an even more jumbled state than when I left it last December. There has been no revolution. Violent and sanguinary revolutions are not to my taste, but I admit they involve almost always one admirable thing, a complete purge of politicians. They clear the ground.

But nobody has been killed in London and nothing has been cleared away. All the dreary old cants are crawling about damaged but mischievous, like lions that have been peppered but not put out of action. I have never met so many bad-tempered people. The development of the great A.R.P. panic seems to have ruined everybody's nerves; nobody likes the Government or the situation and nobody has any attractive alternative to offer; Mass and massacre triumph in Spain and four hundred thousand Spaniards who would rather be liquidated than liberated by Franco, embarrass the easy-going sanitation of the Pyrenees. War does not come. That is due to

\* *News Chronicle*, March 6th, 1939.

the spreading realisation that the catastrophic anticipations of London, Paris, Berlin and indeed most places, being turned into gigantic holocausts, shambles, heaps of ruin and so forth have been much exaggerated. It is not simply that there were never enough petrol, young men of the right quality, gas and explosives to do anything more than a finite and endurable amount of murder and incendiarism—much less mischief in fact than a tom-fool evacuation of London would have done—but also that it is leaking out that at a pinch air warfare can be eliminated almost completely. That gives an entirely new twist to our problems.

In this topsy-turvy world there seems to be nothing self-contradictory in the term "air-mines". The air-mine is a small, unobtrusive floater carrying a high explosive charge, detonators and suitable entanglements, that can be set to drift at any height. And it just drifts about with the wind. It is not merely unobtrusive but, as armaments go today, relatively inexpensive. You can send these things up in shoals, in clouds, in curtains, and aerial mine-sweepers have yet to be invented. There are drawbacks, of course, to this defence. It will not only put your enemy air force out of action but your own also. The fact remains that it is possible to cancel out the air, and that this present waste on excavations, tin-pot shelters and the like is either bare-faced jobbery or patent imbecility. . . .

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But I am wandering from our political perplexities.

I find a number of distressed people going about trying to put together the dislocated but still obstinately living fragments of the political parties that smashed up last year. I find Sir Stafford Cripps working for a "Popular Front", Sir Archibald Sinclair demanding one at a slightly different angle, detached Conservatives prowling and talking ambiguously in undertones, and the Labour Party in its usual attitude of a nasty little boy who would rather clutch his cake to death than share it with any interlopers.

I discover myself entirely indisposed to interest myself in these movements and manœuvres. It seems to me we are confronted with what is almost the fundamental difficulty of political existence in a progressive world, and that is, how to make it over to keep pace with the headlong process of change in the conditions of human life. All our circumstances are demanding a vast enlargement of our collective operations, and no men are so hopelessly pinned to old-scale areas, boundaries, nationalisms, constitutions, procedures, declarations, formulæ, cants and conventions, as these milling politicians who now tangle up our affairs for us. They will waste our lives altogether if we let them go on trying to make a single pattern out of the old fragments of their various jig-saw puzzles. Such a pattern is impossible. You

cannot hope to replace an out-of-date, uncreative, strangulating government like the present British one, merely with a jumble coalition. It is as absurd as the converse situation in America, where all the reactionary forces are hoping to oust Franklin Roosevelt by any old nobody stuffed with newspaper abuse. What one might call "nature's remedy" in the past for such a deadlock has been a revolutionary convulsion. The only alternative to that is the organisation of a non-convulsive revolutionary movement, explicit, rational, directive, outside of politics but near enough to politics and carrying weight enough to set the politicians trimming their sails for it.

You cannot begin that sort of thing right in the political arena. There must be a phase of education, clarification and explanation. It must appear first in universities, schools, books, newspapers, pamphlets. At first the recuperative movement would be not so much a question of a front as of a line. Some such name as the New Liberalism, World Socialism, Scientific World Organisation or World Radicalism would best express its aims. "World Radicalism" appeals to me most; Radicalism carries a valid meaning in the United States as well as in the British system, and it has none of that suggestion of a jejune, anti-Socialist individualism of the Lord Samuel type which has attached itself to Liberalism. The word carries us back to a phase of wholesome and hopeful social

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resentment, before Hegelian claptrap, the misconceptions of Marx and the solemn, disingenuous strategy of the Communists, clouded the wits of the rising generation of common English-speaking people.

It is necessary to *reculer pour mieux sauter*. It is necessary to re-establish a sound basis of common general ideas, and there is nothing of that sort among this miscellany of opposition fragments that Messrs. Cripps and Sinclair, in their several ways, are trying to put together. Fifty years ago the Fabian movement was an effort to get a new constructive drive in British politics, which has many lessons for the present time. It made a great stir, it attracted a number of brilliant young people, but it never worked out and answered some of the major difficulties that confronted it. It tried its experiments in Socialism with old-fashioned local government bodies with unsuitable areas and incompetent personnel; it had no clear ideas about foreign relations, only the vaguest about education, and a quite irrational bias, due to a sort of Marxist contagion, for association with the merely defensive politics of trade unionism. The personally ambitious young men who poured into it would give it no opportunity to organise its mind. They did not want to modernise the world. They wanted politics. Some played Liberal; there was a group of Tory-

Socialists; some flickered towards Communism, and the "Labour Party" began its fruitless career. No Fabian line was ever established. There never was a Fabian front. There was just a Fabian spray. They all wanted to get into Parliament in a hurry. Some of them got in. Can you name them?

The body, the brains, the moral force of a renascent Radical movement must be outside and above Parliament or Congress, as the sun and rain are outside and above the fields they fertilise. It demands a special Radical literature, Radical newspapers, a common Radical teaching, irrespective of colour and flag, linking Washington with Westminster, Belfast and Canberra, Colombo, Oslo, Cape Town, Rangoon—and so on all round about the earth. It need not deal with the local politicians because they will, in the measure of its success, deal with it, profess to serve it and, like Beerbohm's Happy Hypocrite, become moulded to its likeness.

Lord Crewe, I gather, and some associates are organising a Liberal Book Club which is to be something different and stimulating. It is to supply the force behind a new front and so on. I do not find its first volume very forcible. I would have preferred something more in the down-right style of Mr. Hugh Ross Williamson. If they had called it a Radical Book Club it would have



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been stimulating from the outset. Radical is, I feel, far the best word for our present occasions. It suggests going to the roots of things. It suggests digging and weeding. I wonder why the world has neglected that good, strenuous word so long.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEMOCRACY IN PATCHES \*

THE shattering of what are called progressive political groupings throughout the British system and the search for some working formula for their effective reorganisation, have been the most striking facts of the past six months. There is a widespread feeling that even the most elementary human freedoms are in danger, that a world-wide relapse towards lawlessness and violence is in progress, and that the desire of the common man everywhere for an effective restoration of order, security and liberty is baffled by a confusion of leadership and expression. He knows that a varied and abundant life is now a physical possibility for every soul alive, but he finds himself menaced unaccountably and impeded and frustrated at every turn, in his will to live happily. In every direction he finds barriers and threats.

I suppose my chief interest in life, at any rate for the last third of a century, has been the riddle of this frustration. My mind is a simple one, and I was brought up in the good old Radicalism of my father and my old schoolmaster, when Mr. Joseph

\* *News Chronicle*, March 13th, 1939.

Chamberlain was a notorious Red and hardly more acceptable to Queen Victoria than his fellow-republican Sir Charles Dilke. We believed common men ought to have stiff backbones and hold together, trust their reason, exact "ransom"—Joseph Chamberlain's word—from the exploiting classes, ransom leading to complete repayment; and we didn't like irrational dogmas in any shape or form. The vast enlightenment of biological and geological research filled my generation with hope and confidence.

I still have that same faith in the rightfulness and reasonableness of that possible good world, but I am less assured of its realisation. The problem of "Why not?" dominates my mind and my art more and more completely. I have become a student of resistance and inadequacy in spite of myself. Even my novels are studies in frustration, from Kipps the under-educated to Dolores the uncontrollable egotist and Rud Whitlow, the man who was so terrified by life that he could not feel safe until he was dictator of all mankind.

One of the defects common to our minds when we are confronted with anything out of order in the world is the disposition to resort at once to a scapegoat. We become "Anti" something or other, and persuade ourselves that if only that something or other can be defeated, cheated, crushed and put out of existence, all will be well with mankind. So we are all Anti-Fascist, or

Anti-Nazi, or Anti-Red, or Anti-Catholic or Anti-Juif, and it seems to be the most difficult thing in the world to get human minds into the state of wanting a clear and definite new world and setting about getting it, after their hearts' desire. But being an "Anti" is in itself an altogether barren thing. If you are an "Anti" in order to release something, then it behoves you to have a clear idea of what you want to release.

I do my best to keep Pro-World-Pax. To attain that, I am convinced there has to be a world-wide re-education of mankind upon a common basis. Failing such a re-education, our present disorders will go from bad to worse, and that bright vision of a world-wide brotherhood of active, happy and upstanding human beings, which inspired us in the last century, will fade out of the human imagination. I have done my poor best to realise that vision. I have tried to get a rough sketch of a possible world that would serve as such a common basis, hammered out, in three quasi-encyclopaedic books. I have taken to haunting the company of men of science and educational conferences with my theses about the world situation. I talk when I can to publicists and politicians. For the most part they seem to have no idea of the world they are making. They listen to me absent-mindedly, or they try to steal any little

publicity value I have for platform decoration. I try to catch their attention with a passing insult or so, none the less insulting because it is true.

“You talk about democracy,” I say. “You may find yourselves fighting for democracy. Have you ever spent ten minutes thinking about what you mean by a world safe for democracy?”

In pursuit of that idea of re-education I went off to the Australia and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science at Canberra and repeated my pieces there. Everybody was very nice to me and said I was extremely stimulating, but I did not perceive any evidence of stimulation. I wrote one or two articles about the position of Australia face to face with nature and Japan. I received an earnest appeal from my American agent not to write about Australia. America, he said, didn't know anything and didn't want to know anything about Australia. British readers, I gather, do not want to hear anything about the sixty millions of well-governed people in the Dutch East Indies. Yet one knows nothing of Holland who only Holland knows. And nobody, nobody at all, wants to discuss the value of royal visits to America as a substitute for radical understandings. Not a word about it.

And now let the reader look at a map of that part of the world that festoons between

Calcutta and the highly desirable country unsuitable for white labour in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Balancing Rangoon and Singapore is Guam, which the House of Representatives in Washington has just refused to have prepared for defence. The Congressmen are still isolationist. Here are the Americans, the Australians, the British and those very capable people, the Dutch, all studiously ignoring each other, "democracies", as we say, but only by way of a flourish. To the north and reaching down towards this pseudo-democratic festoon is a blindly militant Japan. Nothing is being done to intensify and develop the sense of a common civilisation and a common world law among these kindred peoples. That circle of communities is like a crescent of cows looking at a wolf and incapable of collective action.

"Japan will never dare —", say these excellent people. But Japan can dare like a homicidal maniac. "Japan could never conquer —". But suppose Japan merely began by asking Australia to mitigate that "White Australia" idea. In respect to New Guinea and the Northern Territory. Suppose Japan asked for just a little footing in Java or Papua? Suppose Japan began to finger about among the Pacific Islands? Should we resist collectively or appease severally? And no one has yet discovered where appeasement ends.

I do not know whether there is much enemy propaganda going on to keep the English, Dutch, Australians and Americans apart in the Pacific. Their own pervading, self-protective myopia is probably sufficient. But the ignorance of the ordinary British citizen of the little Holland in Europe and the very important Holland in the East is deep and obstinate, and where a very vigorous and persistent propaganda wedge does keep tapping against democratic solidarity is South Africa. There you have the Afrikaner apparently unaware of the Dutch strand interwoven with the English in world affairs from the Anglo-Dutch President of the United States of America to the Raffles tradition in Java. He just does not think about it and nobody reminds him. He is acquiring a Nazi mentality and his racial consciousness is narrowing.

An able book comes to hand as I write, from America, *Men must Act* by Mr. Lewis Mumford. He criticises the world situation upon absolutely the same lines as an English Radical, I find myself in almost complete agreement with him, but throughout he betrays no consciousness of the world-wide internationalism of Radical thought. The "men" who must act are "we Americans". Why will they not learn about the real English? Why must they keep apart?

Until a great educational campaign gets to work, until a strenuous and explicit revival

of world radicalism on world-wide lines occurs, democracy will be nothing more than a vague, unmeaning, politicians' word. If democracy is worth being made safe for, then it has to become a vigorous intellectual and political movement that will carry us in a flood towards world order and world law. At present all our liberalisms, leftisms, democratic ideas and so forth, are like inter-tidal pools with little eddies and currents that will take us nowhere at all.



## CHAPTER VIII

### TROUBLE IN BURMA \*

BURMA is getting into the headlines. It is becoming prominent for two distinct reasons. One is that it is rapidly becoming the new highway into China, the primary line of communication between China and the Western world, and the second is that the British Government, in its inimitable way, has been evoking a bitter antagonism to British rule in the Burmese mind. The British ruling class do not realise they do it, they do not understand how they do it, but they do it. The same sort of self-complacent arrogance which built up a barrier of evil memories between the Irish and the English, after 1918, is now producing an open sore upon a vital world route. Just how vital that world route is, the Atlas must show. It is plainly the life-line of Chinese defence.

A week or so ago I was in Rangoon and had a brief but vivid glimpse of the trouble there. I find again just that short-sighted, unimaginative, exclusive policy of which I had had glimpses in Bombay and Colombo, which apparently

\* *News Chronicle*, March 13th, 1939.

pervades the whole British imperial system and makes it more and more urgent for civilised imaginations to turn towards some larger, English-speaking synthesis, if free and liberal humanity is to prevail on earth.

I had three days in Rangoon. I know English people fairly well in most of their types and manifestations, and so I decided to begin Burmese, see as much of Burman life and hear as much Burman talk as I could. I planted myself on the Rangoon University as the guest of Dr. Htin-Si, the registrar, heard the views of Burmese teachers, students, writers, journalists and artists and by way of corrective had a glimpse of the other side of things at lunch in the English club. I will not enter here upon the intricacies of the immediate disputes that have brought matters to an acute crisis, to the dispersal of demonstrations, to the bludgeoning and killing of young students, to the gathering of strikers in various positions of vantage. For instance, they were camping in the sacred precincts of the Golden Pagoda, and upon that holy ground even a policeman must go bare-footed. Every policeman among my readers will appreciate the difficulty that makes. A serious clash of race and religion is created by the influx of Moslem cheap labour from India. Taking a leaf from the All-white Australia, the Burmans want a Burma all-Burman. There is, more-

over, a swarm of very illiterate and loosely organised priests, shaven-polled, yellow-clad, carrying sunshades and begging-bowls, who dislike everything that threatens their lives of sunny piety, and are as actively political as their Irish equivalents. The Burman is a smiling, obdurate humorist who shines in opposition. He is beginning to idealise the Irish. "We are the Irish of the East," he says. My first breakfast was with U. Ba Llang, one of the leftward leaders just out of prison for sedition, and quite pleased about it. He talks English admirably and we argued for a couple of hours. I wasn't so much interested in what he said about the situation or what was to be done about it—that was local and personal close-up matter upon which I could form no opinion—as in the general content of his mind; where it all came from and what was to be done about it. And in particular how our dear old British raj appears in the outlook of an active and intelligent Burman. It meant, I found, frustration and repression. When I talked of a great confederation of free peoples sustaining a world law, he smiled broadly. "Tell that", he said, "to your English friends." His stuff was a mix-up of resentful nationalism, a sort of crude communism—communism of sentiment rather than organisation—and what I might call insurrectionism at large. All the

negative stuff in the world. He cared no more for the freedom of the Chinese than he cared for the future of an ant-hill in Patagonia. He knew nothing of the broader modern outlook and I suppose now he is impervious to any such ideas.

In Burma as in India the British raj never explains. In effect it has nothing to explain. It is there, a brainless incubus. Its idea of education has been to give imitation European University degrees by written examination. This is supplemented by a strenuous censorship of "subversive literature" which stimulates every self-respecting Burman to read and distribute all he can of the forbidden fruit. One realises in this Eastern world how completely the existing Imperial system is a paralysis rather than a rule.

The P.E.N. Club of Burma is predominantly Burman. It gave me tea in a charming boat club by the river and I met artists, journalists, novelists, writers, a very pleasant collection of brown and white people. The women mostly wore their hair in the high cylindrical Burmese fashion and their dresses had the free silken brightness of the East. Many of the men had those round pink silk caps with a coquettish pink ribbon bow at the side, a little yellow jacket and a gay undivided trouser so to speak, which is the normal costume of a sober

and serious man in Rangoon. Non-European clothing is becoming a political demonstration. There is a considerable output of Burmese poetry and fiction of which we know very little. We talked of the censorship and the strikes, and tried to make my conception of a broader-based, English-linked, world community clear to the people to whom I talked. But they had nearer things in mind. How can we belong to anything of the kind, they ask, while you cripple our education and stifle our reading? One grave young lady had brought me some snapshots of a lathi charge on the students last December and a group of the young men had prepared a sort of open letter to me, denouncing the ever-tightening strangulation of the press, explaining their objections to the type of education they received, as a mere training for clerkships and salesmanships, and demanding a modernisation that would base it upon broadly handled biological, technical and agricultural teaching. "Our boys", they told me, "are learning more by striking, argument and reading forbidden literature, than by sitting in class-rooms. They are learning to feel responsible for Burma." Perhaps that is right.

And then a surprise was sprung upon me that seemed to bring out the contemporary triangle in world affairs very distinctly. I was presented with a very decorative bandbox and a still more

decorative bag and in them was a complete Burman costume, pink round hat and ribbon, yellow jacket, lovely brocaded silk shirt and slippers after the fashion of what the French call mules. I had a momentary vision of walking up Waterloo platform in that array amidst a jitter of camera-men. "You want to make a Burman of me?" and they agreed. "No", I said, "I am going to treasure this on your account, but if I do wear any national costume it will have to be that of the ancient Kingdom of Kent. And what that was no man remembers, for patriotism is not a Kentish disease. Our motto is 'Invicta', and we are contented with that. My duty as a good citizen of the world is to wear no particular uniform nor costume, nor give any salute except for politeness sake. Tomorrow I shall get into a plane which will pass in four days by Calcutta, Jodhpur, Basra, Baghdad, Jericho, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Crete, Athens, Naples (with a peep down Vesuvius), Marseilles, to Amsterdam. How do you think it is possible to go on living in the national costume of brave little old worlds when things are like that? You see only two sides to this world question, imperialism and nationalism. There is another, the free-thinking, free-speaking, liberal world. Belong to that."

"But our government won't let us. Our

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censorships won't let us. Our schools prevent us.  
The past stands in our way."

"And what on earth would a man do with  
himself if something didn't stand in his  
way? "

## CHAPTER IX

### THE TRAVELLER PROVOKES HIS OLD FRIENDS, THE TEACHERS, AGAIN IN A PAPER CALLED "THE POISON CALLED HISTORY" \*

I AM going to read you a most unmannerly paper. Its title sounds aggressive and it was planned to be aggressive. It was not prepared for this meeting—in the first place. It was written for the League of Nations Union International Conference of Teachers in London. It was aimed very definitely at certain distinguished teachers, Professor Gilbert Murray and Sir Alfred Zimmern in particular, to whose sentimental nationalism I believe the failure of the League of Nations is largely due. I hoped to provoke discussion in London, but on the spur of the moment I got very little response. Here I hope things may be different.

I want to speak very plainly about the relationship of what is called History—but what for the purposes of controversy I am going to call old-fashioned history—to the human outlook. I

\* Read to the Education Section of the Australia and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, Canberra, 1939.



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realise that it will be impossible to do so without giving offence in quite a number of directions, but in a scientific assembly devoted to reality we can easily have too much in the way of propitiatory gestures.

The world today is in an evil state and it faces greater evils. Shirking issues will not save any of us from his or her personal share of those evils. Many factors no doubt contribute to this malaise of our world, but I put it to you that the primary source of our present troubles is the complete incompatibility between the historical traditions which rule our political and social behaviour and the new, more exacting conditions created for us by invention and discovery. The adjustment of history to reality has become a matter of supreme urgency. It will not wait. Discordance means destruction and suffering and blood and enslavement and more destruction and suffering and enslavement until a clear conception of the jarring forces at work in our world is achieved, a controlling conception that is, or else until the present dégringolade is complete.

A year and a half ago I did my best to persuade the teachers assembled in the British Association at Nottingham that the education they were serving out to the new generation in what people call the democratic communities is totally inadequate to the great occasions that face these

communities. The teachers lit up and blazed with indignation. Not about the future, but about the suggestion that their work was not perfect. With the greatest unanimity they declared that I did not know how marvellous and modern their teaching was, how exactly it fitted in with and went beyond my requirements, and also, how impossible it was to get such stuff into what one distinguished exponent of old-fashioned history called the "little noddles" of our coming citizens. A history of mankind to him was, I realised, nothing more than a bulky marmalade of all the histories with which the noddles of himself and his fellow historians are so tightly packed. He could not imagine any other way of telling the story of the past. All these indignant schoolmasters and mistresses and school inspectors declared that I did not know what was being done in the schools. I know very well what is *not* being done in the schools, because I read the papers that tell me how their pupils react to social issues. By their fruits I know them. None of these teachers seemed to grasp the essential difference between history as they taught it and the history I was asking for. I am trying again. I shall do my best to show you why I think schools generally are teaching history in the wrong way and in the wrong spirit. And that a far more drastic revision of our ideas and methods is

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necessary before our teaching can be of service in the cause of world organisation.

I am assuming that a large proportion of this audience consists of historians or students or teachers of history, teachers who either teach history in schools or by way of books and newspapers. I am going to suggest that your pre-occupation with the past blinds you, partially at least, to the present, to what is going on in the world. I suggest that you do not sufficiently adjust your work to the fact that the world is being torn to pieces now by old ideas armed with new and frightful weapons. You see conceptions of national conquest, ascendancy, glory, revenges and sentimental releases, all the romantic lures of the conventional historian, equipped with destructive power beyond all previous times, and you do not properly realise how much this is associated with your work, how much you do in keeping alive the ideas that paralyse drastic social development and lead to war.

In your teaching I find that you accept social and economic distinctions too readily, and that you impose the idea of national differences upon the young. Particularly would I charge you with overstimulating patriotism in the young, and teaching them by implication that French and English and Germans and Jews are by nature and necessity different and irreconcilable. The truth

is not that. None of these ideas of national difference are innate ideas. They have been *taught* to peoples. They have been forcibly imposed upon them. If you changed at birth all the babies of one country for those of another, they would still fight, only they would fight the other way round. Nationalism is the purest artificiality, and is made by the teaching of history and by nothing else, history taught by parents, friends, flags, ceremonies, as well as by the persistent pressure of the schools, but mainly in the schools. And by this school-made nationalism the very existence of civilisation is threatened.

Now I want to put it to you, for your consideration, that there are two dramatically contrasted sorts of history, an old, traditional history which is out-of-date and decaying and becoming more and more poisonous, but which still rules in our schools and in our political institutions, and a new sort of history which is essentially human biology, and which has still to establish itself in our educational machinery. This new history arises naturally and necessarily out of the mighty revolution in biological thought that has happened in the past hundred years, and its development has been tremendously assisted in the last forty years and more by archæological work. The new history deals with a vast and growing mass of concrete fact and scientific criticism, and it

regards written records with an acutely sceptical eye. The old history on the other hand is fundamentally documentary. It is the history in books, manuscripts and inscriptions only. That is my essential thesis, my challenge. There is an old history, bookish history—which for all the headlong denials of indignant teachers is what is still being taught, up and down the scale from the universities to the infant schools. And there is a new history, real history—now most urgently needed—which is different in scope, method, possibilities and effect from the old, and which is hardly being taught at all. This new history is so different from the old that people have suggested that it should be called by a new name. Just as the old anecdotal and descriptive *natural history* of our grandparents gave way to a practically new science, *biology*, of which the study of operating causes was the core, so it may be found necessary to speak by another name of a new history which also puts anecdote and description into subordination, which simplifies detail whenever it can, and seeks, like any other science, to detect operating causes. Human ecology, social biology, have been suggested. But we have not settled upon a term yet, and for the present there is no choice but to talk about the old history, history proper, history as it is commonly understood, and the scientific history that must supplement it almost to the pitch

of replacement, if history is to be of any real service to mankind.

There is a necessary sequence in both these cases. Natural history had to come before scientific biology. History of the descriptive type had to exist before it could be subjected to the probes and acids of criticism. But the new stuff is what matters in this connection. It furnishes the natural clue to that vast and fundamental change in human conditions which is implicit when you talk of the abolition of war. It explains, and that clearly, why consciously directed human life must now undergo a revolutionary change, or blunder on through deepening distresses and disaster. It analyses operating causes, as every honest science does, with a view to foresight. That the old history never did.

The older history in which we have all been saturated from childhood has never had any anticipatory quality. Professor Crawford, the president of the history section, the other day frankly repudiated anything of the sort. The bits and scraps of the new history which we have had to pick up for ourselves are, on the contrary, *full of intimations* of what is likely to happen to us in the years before us, and of what has to be done if certain consequences have to be escaped or attained.

But first let me ask rather more precisely, what

is this older history in which I have said we have all been saturated? Why has it survived so long? What has been its function in the past? And how is it functioning now?

At the back of our minds we find an assumption that the history we learnt at school had some sort of final scientific value, that it was a balanced account of what had really happened in the past. I myself was brought up in that widespread delusion, and in common with multitudes of other active-minded people, my intellectual life story in this respect is largely one of disillusionment. For the reality is plainly different, so soon as you achieve that last phase of adult development, looking facts in the face. That old history ignores operating causes almost entirely, and it colours, distorts and generalises in the most irresponsible way. You will note that in effect I am saying about history practically what that very clear-headed and original American, Henry Ford, also said about it. He said that it was *bunk*—and I am saying that it is a mass of pretentious narrative, almost entirely useless for any practical purpose at all.

From the beginning, it has to be pointed out, history has never been scientifically impartial; it has been written with a purpose. Sometimes but not very often that purpose has been purely artistic—s when Gibbon, for example, created

that mighty spectacular piece, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. But usually it has been written, and almost universally it has been taught, in order to school minds in relation to some particular conception of the community in which they had to live. It sought to make them citizens, it sought to make them patriots, it sought to combine them for glory or some aggressive enterprise. It enhanced their pride in themselves. The Father of History was plainly the propagandist of a Greek attack upon Persia. Most of the historical parts of that strange miscellany, the Old Testament, aim at consolidating that queer crowd of Babylonian Jews who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra and Nehemiah, consolidating them by the legend of a chosen people and a special promise. It has been a very tragic tradition for the Jews, an incentive to racial egotism, a perennial exasperation of the Gentiles round about them.

All national histories are exasperating to the foreigner. The more people come to translate and reach each other's histories, the more likely they are to detest each other. That magnification of "us" and "ours" to the disadvantage and irritation of other peoples pervades nearly every history in the world. Usually the old history begins with a falsified account of the national beginnings. Few go back into any remoter past. A certain number of histories jump into their



story with the favoured nation as a going concern, and many deal only with a definite period of time, during which the favoured nation performs its Stunts. It is rare that any attempt is made to trace changes in the proportion of various social elements or the way in which the legend of a national character is built up, and still rarer is there any checking back of the documentary sources with archæological material. Common history remains still national or regional propaganda lightened by gossip, and at most paying lip service to humanitarian ideals. It is only in quite recent years that any attempt has been made to present a world history, a history of the human species as a species. And then the disposition of the historians has been to jumble up all the partial histories in a sort of crazy patchwork, rather than to discover any general pattern. The time-honoured national and imperial boundaries are not broken down; they are still there as the main divisions of the subject. Yet there *is* a general pattern, and it is simpler than any of these jig-saw shapes which historians present to the new generation. But they have a constitutional disposition to precision in specific detail and an utter recklessness in generalisation. They introduce the most amazing phantoms: the Spirit of the East, the Spirit of the West, the Greek Spirit, the Hebrew Spirit, the virtues of the Nordics, young nations,

old nations, golden ages, the cradle of civilisation, the march of civilisation from East to West. Their training, their tradition, expose them to these childish fantasies. They begin with the arbitrary unreality of patriotism, and to enlarge the scope of history is only to enlarge the scope of their fantasy. Rarely does the old type historian criticise a generalisation. It would destroy his subject. It is in this general looseness and partisan unscrupulousness that the essential unsuitableness of the old history for our present necessities, resides.

I put it to you that if we want the world to become a consistent whole, we must think of it as a whole. We must not deal with states, nations and empires as primary things which have to be reconciled and welded together, if we want world peace, we must deal with these divisions as secondary things which have appeared and disappeared almost incidentally in the course of a larger and longer biological adventure. Education can wipe them out completely. Even an intelligent, critical opposition can so enfeeble them, that everywhere nowadays the established order is forced to a more or less complete suppression of radical criticism. Everywhere. If we are to have a World Pax, these divisions of the matter of the old history under national headings must first be abandoned. It is a wild impossi-

bility to dream of their being at the same time kept distinct and yet being welded together in some sort of disconnected unity. We want the same world history taught in all the schools of the world, just as we teach the same chemistry and the same biology in all the schools of the world. I put that explicitly to you as a thesis.

Now this new history of which I speak, *so far as it still recognises political events*, must be essentially a history, not of any particular community, but of enlarging communities in general. I do not mean by that an enforced coalescence of communities, I mean a real enlargement of scope and intercourse. The world story has to begin at the sub-human level with scattered family groups, and the main operating cause of all the subsequent developments has been the increase in the facilities of communication—the growth and elaboration of speech, gesture, writing, locomotion on land and water, roads, power-driven transport, telegraph, radio, air transport and so on. A crescendo of facilities. Every increase in the range of communications has necessarily opened up new possibilities of co-operation, injury and enslavement. So that continually the nature of social and political history has changed. The rules of the game have changed. It is surely more important to know how and why the rules of the game have changed than to have detailed records

of winning and losing. But the state of historical thought and knowledge in our community is still such that *this secular process of enlarging association*, which is the very core of history, biologically conceived, gets but the scantiest attention. Historians, even if they admit a certain amount of coalescence in the past, will not recognise it as a current possibility. Nations are their units. *Inter-national* and not cosmopolitan is their blessed word. Cosmopolis they will not endure. It never has been. Therefore it cannot be. All history is against it.

But all reality is for it.

With a stupendous rapidity, in the course of one lifetime, we have seen the distances between people abolished and everyone brought into striking distance, trading distance, talking distance of everyone else. The advent of Cosmopolis must become now the dominant thesis of any scientific, directive history.

Let me now put before you some of the leading topics with which the new directive history must deal, and with which the old history, with its incurable bias for particularism, for nationalist sentimentality, is too entangled to deal. They are urgent topics and they are primary topics. I want to be quite clear about this. I do not intend that these topics I am proposing should be *added* to the present teaching of history. I am proposing

that they shall replace the present teaching of history altogether. I propose that the present division of historical teaching into the chiefly political history of localities, of countries, of selected peoples, of periods, should be *absolutely and completely scrapped*. I propose that the teaching of Greek History, Latin History, Jewish or Bible History, English History, French History, Mediæval History, German History, Chinese History, our Island Story, the Empire and so on and so on, as separate subjects, shall be *entirely abandoned*.

Bear in mind, please, that I am speaking of teaching. So far as special historical study and research go, there is excellent justification for the intensive treatment of particular gangs, persons and phases, bits of record and groups of events, in the light that a broader historical and biological education would throw upon such special studies. I do not see why that sort of study should not be further concentrated and intensified. There is need, of course, of a great increase in scientific research upon past developments, but that does not detract from the meticulous pursuit of historical fact by every available means. But research is one aspect of history and teaching quite another, and I am speaking of *teaching* now and particularly of teaching from the point of view of preparing the common human mind for a

World Pax. With a full realisation of the horror, contempt, disgust and hatred I am evoking in many of your minds, I repeat again that if you are really in earnest about world peace, you must utterly and entirely wipe out this time-honoured system of dividing history into national and imperial histories, that has hitherto prevailed.

And instead——

Instead I suggest that in teaching the history of mankind we approach the story from the biological side. We must come to the present by way of the remote past. We must tell the truth about human origins. We cannot afford to muffle that up in the interests of a few ignorant bigots. We must begin with the conception of small, sub-human, family groups scattered about the world, almost completely unaware of each other. We must trace the development of speech, of gesture and drawing, and we must show how these beginnings of communication and understanding led inevitably to larger communities.

This is a mode of presentation far more acceptable to the childish mind than “In 43 a Roman host from Gaul assailed *our* Southern Coast”, or any other of the time-honoured nationalist chants. How you start history in Australia I do not know. That is how we set about it in England up to quite a little time ago. In place of that, the teacher of modern history must teach of wandering tribes, of

caves and shelters, of primitive habitations, of the invention of implements. Never once should a civilised teacher talk of *our* tribe, *our* people, *our* race. The truth about that bit of doggerel is that in almost every line it is a foolish lie. So far from the southern coast of Britain being *ours* at the time of Cæsar, We modern Britishers, as represented by our ancestral genes, were almost everywhere but there. We were in Gothland, on the Baltic coast, down the Danube, in Palestine, in Egypt—Heaven knows where. But wherever we were our ideas, our arts, our powers and range were progressing in an orderly and intensely interesting way. The history of communication, the history of implements, and the intelligent study of the consequences of this progress and extension of human mentality is infinitely simpler and truer than any of the old history. It is healthy food, whereas that old race-and-nation stuff is poisoned food. Children like the unpoisoned stuff far better. They like to hear about activities rather than quarrels and scandals, to which they are to be incited to sacrifice themselves. Every step in method and material, every new device, has changed the social conditions and mentality of the peoples to whom these new things happened. Everywhere the old tradition fought a long but losing battle against the adaptation of usage, law and convention to the new conditions.

Political institutions have always been substantially dependant upon material change. Political institutions are not primary human things. They are shadows on the surface, they may reveal contours, but they do not make them. They are mere marks and symbols. They may become a mischievous obstruction to the natural development of human life.

Consider one chapter in this more fundamental human history for which I plead, the onset of iron. Iron came into human life bringing with it all sorts of possibilities, for war, for peace. The history of iron begins romantically—with the fall and use of great meteorites. Up to the very present day, the irons, the steels, direct and rule and change life as no Alexanders, no Cæsars, no Jengis Khans or Mussolinis have ever done. You can see the things that arise out of iron. from the first iron spear-head and the first axe, to the steel rail, the battleship and the motor, you can see them tempting and obliging and compelling men to change their ways of life and their relations to one another. There were no particular iron-minded peoples. It was a matter of quite secondary importance to everyone but the gangs and individuals concerned, what collection of people first got hold of the new thing. In any hands it did the same thing to the owners of those hands. It meant better weapons, easier and swifter stone



and woodwork, better ploughing. It lorded it over life, and the kings of the old community were its servants. It still lords it over life. Iron is still ruling us, because we are so besotted in our history-made politics that we cannot rule iron.

The other day I was reading about one historical edict of this metallic empire, and that was Tom Harrisson's account of the destruction of the social life in the New Hebrides. Before the axe and nails came to these islands the felling of a tree, the building of a house, the hollowing out of a canoe was a long enterprise demanding the brotherly exertions of the whole community. Such work was elaborated, it was socialised. It determined the social organisation. Life was full and interesting for active young men then. Then came iron, the swift, cheap hatchet, and everything was changed. There was no longer the same need for mutual help, old procedure was discredited and, most dangerous thing any community can produce, there appeared a class of insufficiently employed young men with easy weapons ready to their hands. Social disorganisation followed inevitably.

The story of iron is only one section of metallurgical history. Let me tell you of a bit of contemporary history that is lying like a bomb under all the boundaries and institutions of today. I will remind you of your chemical text-book and

what it has to tell you about a metal called Beryllium. It takes its innocent place among the metals, its atomic number is four, and its symbol is *Be*. And here is what our text-book tells us—without the slightest thrill in its voice about *Be*. It is much lighter than aluminium, it resists corrosion better, it is as hard as steel, and it conducts heat very rapidly. Just that. But ask any engineer, any munition-maker, if he has any use at all for a metal that does not corrode, is lighter than aluminium, harder than steel and—very important in guns and the pistons of engines for example—a good conductor of heat. It is brittle, but a little alloy may correct that. It is rare at present, it is just a curiosity, and so at present it is not used for aeroplanes or automobile cars or great guns or battleplanes or in fact for any of the vital purposes for which it is far better fitted than any common metal. It could be made into great guns or battleplanes stronger than those we have now and weighing less than a quarter of their equivalent in steel. Think of that. It could be made into tremendous tools and into structural frameworks. And so on. This is a rare metal now—yes. Tomorrow it may be cheaper than tin or copper. We are living on a planet explored as yet only in the most superficial way and, for all we know to the contrary, some prospector in some out-of-the-

way place may be poking about now, as we talk here, on the verge of discovering cheap and abundant beryllium ore. For all we know, a few score fathoms down, there may be deposits of the ore in a hundred or a thousand places in Australia, in the Arctic Circle, in China or anywhere. And then—good-bye to steel! the age of beryllium will be upon us. And if it should be found in one place and not in many places—What would it do for the people who had it? What would it do to the people who hadn't got it?

That is what happened with iron and coal in the past, and besides such happenings the little strutting figures of Alexander and Napoleon, and the silly things they said and did, seem very small indeed to me.

Metallurgical history is only one chapter in the story of implements and devices, one chapter in *real* human history. Another section would be the story of the boat, the ship, the wheel, the domestication of the horse and the making of roads. These things arose here and there; the history of their beginnings is profoundly interesting to every free intelligence; and they seeped about among the growing human communities. Every one of them changed human relations. Why don't we build the minds of the world's children on that?

Every child is eager to learn about such things. Think of the toys they like! No one dreams of giving intelligent children nice little images of Great Men,—Cæsar, Moses, Buddha, Mr. Chamberlain and so on. They would be bored. They would just break them. But implements and inventions are life. New classes of workers appeared, old classes were superseded, symbolic beliefs lost their significance, the reality of power shifted from group to group because of them. People got at each other in new ways.

Old prestige fought against these changes. The history that the older order sustained, did all it could to deny their reality. Old-fashioned history carries on a pitiful fight against reality. It builds up a fabric of false reverence for the flukes and fancies of our fathers. Up to the present day, history teaching has broken up the picture of the real operating causes in human affairs and does everything possible to conceal them. The history of states and nations is not the essential history of mankind, its chapters are not even fragments of that history, they are stains and smears on reality. They hide the shape of reality. The old history is very largely a history of the bragging and misbehaviour of the peoples who were thrust for a little time into a position of advantage because the new thing had come to them first. Our Island Story—Empire Building

—rubbish! When the new education does have to take cognizance of the kingdoms and empires that have come and gone, like flashes of colour in an oily pool, it will have to deal with them with humour, sometimes with indignant humour, at their childish attempts to monopolise and exploit these ever-unfolding gifts of our planet to humanity as a whole.

I will not speak at length about certain other primary realities in the spreading, development and coalescence of human communities, of diseases and particularly of epidemic diseases, of natural variations of climate—the history of South-East Russia and Central Asia, for example, is not so much a history of what mankind has done there as of the things that fluctuations of rainfall have done there. And from the earliest times man appears in biological history as a nuisance to himself as well as to the rest of living things. What spendthrift ancestors we have had! What wastrels we still are! And all because history teaches us no better. Man burns and cuts down forests, he destroys soil, he acclimatises destructive animals. A map of the world showing the devastated regions, where devastation is due to mankind, would amaze most people. It ought to be put in every child's Atlas. A history of the devastation of the world, due to planless exploitation, uncontrolled com-

petition and conflict, leading up to the hypertrophied war of today. is far nearer the reality of things than this amiable history some teachers want to teach, of the League of Nations as the crown of human progress. In the past hundred years you have seen great regions of the United States turned to sandy desert, you have seen Australia swept by fires, ring-barking and rabbits, you have seen a slaughter of scores of useful animal species, you have seen a monstrous destruction of natural resources, and your old history teaching does nothing, not *that*—to awaken the minds of the coming generation to the supreme gravity of this process. It represents the nineteenth century as a high old time for mankind, under the direction of wise, wise monarchs and statesmen, whereas it was a phase of almost imbecile profiteering and competitive waste. The old history does not heed such things, it does not explain, it does not want to explain, and when presently vast hordes of human beings are found wandering like hungry lemmings about the world, it makes no attempt to explain. It hasn't the mentality to explain. It exaggerates heroes and leaders whenever it can, it talks clap-trap about racial energy and decadent peoples, and hurries on to map out new political boundaries and break up and lose the essential problems of life in fresh national entanglements.

But the new history is not simply an account of the general material life of mankind. Do not imagine that, though I began first with the material expansion and changes of human life, I consider that to be anything more than the groundwork and framework of the new history. Its subtler and more important business is the study of the development of socially binding ideas through the medium of speech and writing. How did language, speech and writing arise? Why the secular increase in the size of states? The populations to whom contemporary teachers have been teaching history, have hardly a shred of an idea about that. How does a language guide and determine thought? Does the structure of a language determine a peculiar idiom of thought? People are beginning to realise as much, to demand books about it, but the old-type historians have done nothing to show how the imposition of a language or a blending of languages gives a new twist and often a new power to the community's mental processes. I find in that excellent new encyclopædia the French are producing so heroically, a very admirable comparative study of the Aryan, Chinese and Japanese languages as instruments of thought. A language is an implement quite as much as an implement of stone or steel; its use involves social consequences; it does things

to you just as a metal or a machine does things to you. It makes new precisions and also new errors possible. There are endless things you can say in English that you cannot say in French and Russian and no doubt vice versa.

The old-fashioned history never called attention to that. That did not come into its ken. It has been letting people grow up with a belief that, apart from the natural changes from Old Saxon to Old English, Middle English and so on, it would be possible for a common Londoner of let us say A.D. 800 to exchange ideas with a common Londoner of today. But in reality they would be using instruments as different in complexity and possibility as a coracle and a rather worn and misused motor launch. They would not be able to make head or tail of each other. An Englishman of today put back to the England of 1066 would be far more a foreigner than if he were dropped in contemporary Japan. And when a history don sits down to tell you of the political schemes of Cæsar and Alexander, he never attempts to get, much less to give, any account of the geographical or administrative knowledge of these two *Raiders*. He makes believe these fellows knew all that we do and thought in the same fashion. I doubt if either of these portentous figures had even as much



political creativeness as the late Huey Long—or was as intelligent a man.

Not only does the old history teaching give people nothing about the powers and dangers of the mechanical implements men have used and are using, but it develops no sense of the binding ideas that hold and have held communities together. It does not warn them against the corrupting effect of old-fashioned ideas.

These binding ideas, these national and religious legends and mythologies in which we were all saturated in our youth, are morbid mental growths of the most complicated sort. The laws of their development and operation have to be examined and exposed frankly and scientifically. The old history has accepted and treated these flexible and unstable systems as inalterable. In reality they are at least as controllable as the contagious and infectious diseases of the body. And their proper sanitation is imperative if any permanent world peace is ever to be attained.

My conviction of the extraordinary uselessness of the old history in our treatment of modern problems has been very much quickened in the last few years by my excitement over two particular questions. One of these is the continuing, steady ill-will of large sections of the American community towards Britain, and of influential sections of the British community towards

America. This split does much to weaken the force of liberal opinion in our English-speaking community. The other question is the far more moving and tragic situation of the Jew in the modern world. Both these questions concern the establishment and growth of a legend, and the old history, which is itself essentially the offspring of legend, has a natural aversion to the parricide involved.

I will merely glance at the amazing paradox of the American situation. A century and a half ago the original thirteen states of the Union cast loose from economic exploitation under the British monarchy. They did so with the support and sympathy of the City of London and of large sections of the British people. They got rid of George III and the Lords and Bishops and all that. We didn't. It was a social quite as much as a territorial conflict. But to hold the new, detached colonies together, it was necessary to simplify the issue and tell a story of the unmitigated disingenuousness of all British people. That is an old, old story now, but it became a master idea in the American mind. That idea is still sustained by a number of American writers with the passion of fanatics and the industry of paid propagandists. In the United States of America now, in addition to a strong British ingredient, you have a vast popula-

and centering its story upon an alleged promise of God to return certain people to Palestine. Everywhere in that ancient world were Semitic people, politically dispossessed, but they met one another, they had their gathering places, many of them read and wrote, they counted, they traded, they formed a string of similar communities with similar habits, customs and ceremonies. What more natural than that the Bible, that collection of writings, with its general insistence on a coming dramatic reinstatement, should capture the Semitic imagination everywhere, should set about assimilating these subdued peoples? Suddenly in your histories, Phœnicians, Carthaginians, Babylonians disappear—and as abruptly everywhere you find Jews. Judaism and Christianity were manifestly born side by side in the opening years of the Roman Empire. They were attempts of the human mind, and particularly of the Semitic-speaking section of humanity, to adjust itself to its new conditions of political inferiority. It was profoundly human to fall in with this idea of being God's Chosen People, unpopular and scattered, but destined to an ultimate triumph.

That was very natural social psychology, but it was bad history. It had a poisonous strain in it. It set up a division in the spirit of mankind, so that a great multitude of brilliant, able

and skilled people, constituting a majority of the trading, travelling and money-handling strata in the European-West-Asian regions, were set apart by the circumstances of their upbringing from any chance of coalescence with the people about them. Their exclusiveness increased. The developing tradition made them more and more a peculiar people obstinately resolved to keep apart. Every practising Jew is still born in blinkers. Every Bible-reading Christian is infected with a resentment against an imputation of inferiority. Every intelligent Gentile is subtly irritated by an exaggerated suspicion of Jewish solidarity. None of us are to blame for this. This unfortunate Babylonian mythology, that utterly mischievous fable of a Divine Promise and Divine favouritism, has poisoned us all alike, and nothing can liberate us but a complete revolution in our conception and teaching of historical fact.

I can imagine no more dreadful position in the world today than to be an intelligent Jew, with a clear sense of reality. However great his gifts, he is going to be more or less frustrated, he is going to be a marked man. It is no good his claiming to be a citizen of the world. The Bible-trained Gentile world will not have it. It will say "No, you are a Jew". And the Bible-trained Jewish world will not have it. It will

say, "Remember you are a Jew. Stick to your own people". Never has this dilemma had such long and sharp horns as it has today. Maybe we are in a phase of peculiar exacerbation about this business, but it seems to me that until we have had a strenuous clearing up of history in both Christian and Jewish education, until it is possible for the Jew to cease being distinctively a Jew and become a Cosmopolitan without shame or falsehood, this miserable and tragic discord will enfeeble the intellectual processes of mankind and spoil the lives of innumerable people.

I cite the Jewish question as a particularly bad instance of the distortion of human life by the poison called history, and as a major sample of historical assimilation. But it is only the most conspicuous case of historical poisoning. All over the world where history is taught, the history that separates prevails. You are not going to do anything to turn the world from its evil courses by assembling all these poisoned histories together, sewing them together with that bit of weak, rotten string, the League of Nations, and imagining they will act as antidotes to each other.

So, repeating myself, I conclude :

The old history is by its very nature *useless* as the basis of a World Peace Ideology. It is

antagonistic to that. It is a struggle to sustain the out-worn story of personified Britannias, Germanias, Holy Russias, Israels, and so forth, meritorious races and chosen peoples. And that League of Nations, that little bit of a paper hat on the top, not of a Colossus, but of a squirming heap of patriotisms, was only a last desperate attempt to carry on the old patchwork of nationalist ideas into a new world that has no use for them at all. They have outlived their use, they decay, they become poisonous. Cosmopolis in its cradle was sick and crippled by their infection. We do not want Leagues of Nations, we want a ruling idea of a world in common. If the young Hercules of a new world is to live, its first feat must be to strangle the tangled coil of poisonous old histories in its cradle.

Without a proper teaching of the realities of the new history the outlook for World Peace is hopeless. Let us get on with it then, in our own minds first of all, and then in the universities, the encyclopædias of knowledge and the schools. Let us make a burnt offering of our old history text-books to Cosmopolis, to the always natural and now necessary Fraternity of Mankind.

## CHAPTER X

### THE HONOUR AND DIGNITY OF THE FREE MIND

*An Address that was not delivered in Stockholm.*

THE Annual Congress of the International P.E.N. Club was to have been held in Stockholm from September 4th to September 7th, 1939. At first I was disinclined to attend and would not undertake to give a lecture, but as the world crisis developed I realised that it afforded the possibility of a clear public assertion of the supreme value of the creative mind. I prepared the following address and asked the Secretary of the Congress to afford me facilities for a semi-public delivery. But as the war crisis became intense, first one group and then another decided not to attend and the Congress was finally abandoned. The world-intelligence organisation evaporated, promising to materialise again on a more favourable occasion. I went to Stockholm for a day or so nevertheless and I discussed the world situation with one or two writers who had already gathered there. Under the circumstances, however, my address reads

rather like a companion piece to Max Beer-bohm's remarkable caricature of Walt Whitman exhorting the American eagle to soar.

The Stockholm P.E.N. Club never flapped a wing. In the words of the great English poet, it "softly and silently vanished away, for the Club *was* a Boojum, you see."

ADDRESS TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED TO THE  
STOCKHOLM P.E.N. CONFERENCE.

The P.E.N. Club is an organisation which has come to realise its possible functions as it has grown, and developed responsibilities from unpretentious beginnings. Let me not exaggerate its realities. I could wish that it included all the literary and artistic and scientific and educational and journalistic people in the world. Or at least that it could gather all the stars of those activities into its constellation. Then, indeed, it would be a power.

But as the stars in the intellectual and artistic world have temperaments and individualities and *amour propre* and a touchiness, it is almost in their nature not to combine but to go off at the slightest excuse, at a tangent, and the more I see of this P.E.N. Club the more I marvel at the patience, good humour, persistence, devotion and practical wisdom of these Club secretaries who hold it together. We of the P.E.N. Club



are as representative as we can be. We deplore our deserters, our abstainers, we deplore a sort of snobbishness that keeps many a tender, if gifted, egotism aloof from us, but that must not deter us from speaking and acting plainly as the voice of the free, mental and creative activities of mankind.

*There is no other body able to undertake this task.*

In its beginnings the P.E.N. Club made no such claim. It implied rather than asserted the world republic of art, literature and thought. It confined itself mainly to pleasant social encounters, to travel, sight-seeing and an interchange of services, because it did not realise that its assumption of the supremacy of culture and civilisation in human affairs could be challenged. It thought that was being taken care of elsewhere. Stress was laid, therefore, on local colour and local interests.

Now there is a great darkening of the face of human affairs, and we realise that what were the tacit assumptions of our early days have, in this gathering darkness, to come into the foreground of our minds.

In the past we have stressed our character as national representatives. It is possible that we have stressed that side of life too much. Too much stress has been laid on the national aspect of cultural life. I have beside me two little books as an example. They represent two collections

of pictures that were, I suppose, intended to bring out something national in art. They are both called *Contemporary Art of 79 Countries*. One collection was displayed at the Great Exhibition at San Francisco and the other in New York. From each one of 79 separate countries a picture and an artist had been selected to represent the national artistic bent. You have the national art of France exemplified by one picture, the national art of Wales by one picture, the artistic achievement of Trinidad, of Yugoslavia, of China, Costa Rica and Jamaica. The painting of each of these communities is represented as being something authentic, distinctive, separable. So that you can institute comparisons, set up rivalries, develop a sense of difference, do picture deals, insist upon patriotic purchases and æsthetic boycotts.

These pictures have been painted under very variable conditions of light, colour, atmosphere and social stimulation, but it becomes plain at once to anyone who turns over these pages that this super localisation of art is absurd. They demonstrate, if the fact needed demonstration, that painting is one thing throughout the world. It is a great International, radiating mainly from the studios of Paris.

No doubt you could divide the world into distinctive regions, regions where, for instance, the light is cold and colour becomes a craved-for

over with feathers and medals and decorations to assert himself.

There have been attempts to deny the universality of the scientific process. In Communist circles you may hear the most terrible balderdash about proletarian chemistry or proletarian mathematics, and in Russia some ignorant spy of a commissar may intrude suspiciously upon the deliberations of a scientific committee.

In Germany also it is alleged that some remarkable iniquity attaches to Jewish physics and the relativity of Einstein is denounced and banned. It seems the true Nordic Germans, whatever that word Nordic means, are so incapable of realising that space and time are not real things but merely modes of apprehension that they cannot grasp the new ideas. But in all mathematical learning, as everybody knows, there are a series of steps in the understanding of its essential symbolism, and at each step a certain number of students fall out.

The typical case in the past was the Fifth Proposition of the First Book of Euclid. That was the celebrated *Pons Asinorum*. The crowds of the rejected accumulated at the Pons and never got over it, but it never occurred to them that their inability to grasp the matter was any proof of their moral and mental superiority. Later on came fresh difficulties with the beginnings of trigonometry and conic sections and a fresh

slaughter of the stupid. The propositions of Relativity are just another *Pons Asinorum* in the progress of mathematical thought, and the fact that this Nazi-dom, which has to cramp its intelligence to the limitations of Herr Hitler and his associates, declares itself unable to grasp this new turn of thought, marks not a difference but merely mental deficiency. The presence of a certain proportion of unteachable blockheads in a population is no more a proof of any fundamental racial or local differences in the human mind, than is the legislation against the teaching of evolution in the State of Tennessee in America. It means merely that stupidity is in power, that the school teaching has been feeble and that fools and their prejudices have got civilisation under in that particular region. It does not mean that we are in the presence of some welcome variation of human creative activities.

In the matter of the freedom of art and the two great divisions of science, therefore, the P.E.N. Club, when it is put to the question, comes out on the side of Cosmopolis. We hold, we are here to assert, that the free-thinking, free-speaking intelligence is of more value than any political, racial or sectarian divisions whatever. And I think that in certain directions now we might very well set ourselves to implement our activities more effectively.

In the first place, there is now a considerable

movement on the part of scientific workers, to consider their responsibilities to society at large. It is quite a new urgency. The British, the American, the Australian and other Associations for the Advancement of Science, all in the last year or so, have created special divisions for the study and improvement of the relations of the world of research to political and social life; they have set on foot an enquiry into the modernisation of education and the wider diffusion of knowledge, and I believe it would be of very great mutual advantage if the P.E.N. Club could bring its assertion of intellectual freedom into a co-operative liaison with this awakening of the scientific world republic to the dangers of official interference and misdirection that threaten it. Their cause is our cause.

And the second suggestion I would like to make is the possible grouping of various national delegations at these Conferences of ours, according to their kindred cultures. These gatherings of ours afford considerable facilities for subordinate meetings. We have already made an experiment in such grouping. Last year at Prague we got together, at the initiative of Dr. Curcin of Dubrovnik, representatives of the various Slav-speaking cultures in our Club (with the exception of the Poles, who at that time, I regret to say, were playing appeasement politics with Germany). And all these Slav delegates

discovered an essential and distinctive mental solidarity.

I believe that is an idea that might well be extended. Our Conference might very well carry with it better facilities for the friendly co-ordination of, let us say, a Scandinavian or Gothic group, an English-speaking group, a Latin group, a Spanish-speaking group, and the like. No reason why groups should not overlap. Based primarily upon linguistic affinities and common literary associations, these groupings would be able to present not little, merely political, faked-up *states*, but real and natural provinces in the republic of human thought. In this friendly atmosphere the grouped delegates could work out their minor differences to a common formula. Then they could talk to other groups. How interesting it would be for the Spanish speakers as a whole to compare with the English speakers as a whole! Or the Latins with the Scandinavians.

The British Association meets in a number of sections. If we had a similar sectional system it would enable us to cover many more questions and to deal with them more intensively than we do at present.

I put these two suggestions to you.

So far I have talked only of the world republics of art, music, science. I have still to deal with our cardinal issue, the freedom of

literary expression, the free play and exchange of ideas throughout the world and the relations of that cosmopolitan idea to the interferences and aggressions of governments and political authorities.

In the hopeful nineteen-twenties in which the P.E.N. Club was born, it was possible for us to declare we kept out of politics, we repudiated any political entanglements. We were—I think it was my friend Signor Marinetti who said it at Dubrovnik—above politics. I regret he is not here today to sustain me in what I am going to say.

Unhappily politicians and policemen have not respected these handsome repudiations of ours. They came after us. They will not let us go our way—above politics.

The freedoms of cultural life are being subjected to violent and sustained attack, and what is perhaps subtler and more grievous, a steady campaign goes on to reduce literature, education and intellectual activity generally, to the servitude of political propaganda.

The time has come for us to deal plainly with the attack upon the dignity of the human mind, both through violence and through corruption, which is now going on.

And the only spirit in which we can meet the attack upon us is to assert boldly and aggressively the pride of original thought and creative work.

There is indeed a vast amount of rubbish in the writing, painting, dramatic worlds—don't we know it—an inky riff-raff, the street-walkers of the press and library, the picture show and theatre. And there are the pretentious and there are the deliberate impostors. We have to rub shoulders with them and suffer them. They crowd the scene, they confuse the public mind.

Nevertheless, the authentic writer and artist and scientific worker are the aristocrats of the human community. There is nothing above them under heaven. They are masters. *Cher maitre* is no idle compliment to them. They work on honour and under no man's direction. They are subject to an inner necessity, to do the utmost that is in them.

In times of security there is no need to hammer upon this reality. But in these times of danger and disorder, humility becomes cowardice and submission is betrayal.

This is simply a statement of fact. Take such a figure as Voltaire. He was, he is, one of the greatest princes of the world. He lives today as alive as when he lived in danger of a prison. I have friends who tell me they read *Candide* at least once a year and find it a living inspiration.

But try to remember Voltaire's political contemporaries. The kings of his time and the little, silly, influential politicians who ran about and started wars. Most of you, unless you are



students of the period, will find great difficulty in recalling the names of many of these powerful pigmies. Their personalities have already sunk into almost complete oblivion.

We remember Catherine the Second and Frederick the Great, because they had the intelligence to correspond with Voltaire. But what ruled Geneva then and what was happening in Italy?

Take Gibbon again. Like so many of our English painters he learnt most of his art in France. His *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* has shaped and still shapes men's ideas of the process of history. Or take the starry constellations of scientific research. Take these cardinal figures in biological thought, Charles Darwin and his great spokesman, Huxley.

How do you see Charles Darwin, that gentle old man in his Kentish cottage, in relation to the politicians of his time? They made impressive figures, but the sawdust runs out of them. There was Gladstone, that resonant torrent of pompous emptiness. In my boyhood England was aflame with his Midlothian Campaign. And who cares now about his Midlothian Campaign? I would like to give the P.E.N. Club a questionnaire. What was the Midlothian Campaign about? And did it matter?

And in those days Disraeli came back to England from the Conference of Berlin. "Peace

and Honour"—that was the precious gift he brought, and he made the Queen of England Empress of India. That stuff seems more than a little tawdry now. But biological science marches on from the initiatives of Darwin and Huxley with an ever-increasing reality. And what they did lives vitally in all our minds.

Or let me come nearer to our own times. Think of the comings and goings of French political life during the life-time of Pierre Curie. There, if you like, was a prince in exile, living in poverty and neglect and nevertheless working, he and his splendid wife, with the aristocratic devotion of those who own their own minds completely and wait upon the orders of no man. These were magnificent persons.

Or again, there was Sigmund Freud, a cardinal figure in human thought, who has changed and illuminated men's interpretations of conduct and motive for ever. There, again, is one who has made no concessions to person or prejudice in his conception and rendering of the truth. I suppose there is hardly a play or novel written nowadays in which his mighty influence is not to be traced. He was living in England; he was very anxious to become a British citizen before he died, and he did England a very great honour by that desire.

Unhappily its realization was postponed and frustrated by the ignorance and prejudices of

various individuals in the present British Government. (But perhaps I had better keep what I have to say about the British Government in that matter until I get home again.)

I am trying in this address to put things in their proper relations, and to give the real relative values of the creative intelligence and, what ordinary people call, the powers that be. I want to put these individuals who are threatening the entire order and dignity of human life in their exact place in relation to the things we stand for.

And apt to my purpose comes the news that Signor Mussolini has suppressed the works of Voltaire in Italy. Signor Mussolini has decided to obliterate Voltaire. That is a fair challenge to all that we represent. Let us take these two men and weigh them one against the other.

Now do not let us be influenced by mere power for mischief. We all know about the Fascist régime, castor oil, the murder of Matteotti, the blister gas in Abyssinia and all the rest of it. All very foul and horrible. That I should call political stuff and this is no place to enlarge upon it. I propose to strip off all these disagreeable associations from Signor Mussolini, and to consider him simply as one of ourselves, a playwright, a journalist, an autobiographer, who happens to be in the amazing position of being able to express a judgment and pronounce

a ban upon Voltaire. And directly you wipe off the blood and the beastliness of his régime from him you begin to see him as the little pretentious fellow he is, hardly well enough equipped to avail himself of the kindly tolerance of the P.E.N. and be acceptable as a member.

He wrote a play about Napoleon. I saw it in London. It was tawdry; it was silly, it was simple-minded. I have read the autobiography he dictated. It is a foolish, undignified performance. He reveals himself a snob, pretentious and disingenuous. He hides things about his past; he claims every Mussolini who ever figured in history as his ancestor.

And he knows even better than his critics that he cuts a poor figure. There is the realisation of an essential inferiority in every one of his poses, and he poses continually. He is always putting on odd clothes, big busbies and things of that sort, and it is only people who are profoundly discontented with their own individualities who have this mania for dressing up. Most of his journalism is bombastic. I am telling you nothing you do not know about him. There is a copious literature about him. Some of which he has tried rather absurdly to suppress. He will furnish the most delicious material for an ultimate biography. I envy the young man or woman who will write it.

But meanwhile he aspires to obliterate Voltaire!

Cannot you see the dry, kindly smile of the dear old giant, as this midget condemns him to extinction?

And yet, on the whole, Mussolini is the most intelligent of all these odd figures, these leaders and dictators who have taken it upon themselves to defy the aristocracy of the mind.

I won't talk politics. There is no need to enter into political issues with them. There is no need for us to set out to attack them on any political score. But like Mussolini, though at a slightly lower level of intelligence, they have *forced* themselves upon our attention. From the Nazi burning of the books onward the P.E.N. Club has been obliged to consider the claims of these people to a decisive control of the creative life.

You will remember how at Dubrovnik we reasoned with the Nazi P.E.N. delegation, which was attempting to use our organisation for Nazi propaganda, how they tangled themselves in our questions, and how, at last, in sorrow rather than in anger we watched their withdrawal.

Since then the leaders of the Central Powers have continually challenged us for a verdict upon their cultural standing. It is not we who challenge them.

We are obliged to judge their claims to that standing by the exacting standards of gifted,

honest and creative people and by our standards these men are entirely contemptible. Herr Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is an ill-written outpouring of patriotic beer-hall and café chatter. It is made up of chewed newspaper, of stuff wiped off café tables and of political hearsay, and the effusions of Herr Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, are below the level of an ordinary, scurrilous newspaper hack. We are bound to deliver a verdict, and this is the verdict we, as an assembly of cultivated men and women, pledged to the maintenance of high creative effort, throughout the world, are bound to deliver. Such, we observe, is the quality of the intelligences that dominate political life, peace and war and the material welfare of millions of human beings.

I will not now carry this criticism of anti-cultural suppressions into the Russian province. I have discussed the disastrous, dogmatic obscuration of the Communist Dictatorship elsewhere. In 1934 I did my best to induce a number of writers in Russia to accept the broad principles of freedom we profess and to come into the P.E.N. Club system. The powers were against me. Roughly, the case we should have to consider would be a parallel story. It is the same usurpation of the privilege of intellectual judgment by political upstarts, subservient officials and organising bodies.

It happens to be the case that these inferior

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Individuals in superior positions can precipitate vast disasters upon mankind, but that is no reason for abandoning the conception of free expression which alone makes life worth living for most of us here.

There is no more reason to blind ourselves to their intellectual insignificance, or to refrain from speaking frankly about it, than there would be for us to greet Al Capone on his approaching release from jail, where no doubt he has been writing a book, with an invitation to become our president and let bygones be bygones.

Again I say. let us retain our sense of values. We stand here for something greater than any government or any nation on earth. The duty of governments is to serve and protect human creativeness. Nothing, not even a world catastrophe, can alter that. A rat with a poisoned mouth may bite and kill a man. Rats before now have spread epidemics and destroyed millions of people. But a man is none the less a man and the rat remains a rat.

It is horrible, it is macabre, when a scarecrow, a fliberty gibbet, a grotesque bundle of clothes and newspaper stuffing, turns on a man and kills him, but that does not make the scarecrow a man, nor does it rid the man of his essential pride and dignity, unless that man gives way to fear.

Well, I do not think we of the P.E.N. Club

are going to fall out about the supreme value of truth and beauty sought and won in freedom. You know there is an old Latin saying, "Great is truth and it will prevail". That may be so. But these are very dark times and it is quite possible that truth and beauty will not prevail. We have to face that. And it seems to me that the aristocrat in every true writer and artist and scientific worker will respond, that nevertheless the supreme value is free, unsullied accomplishment. That we will serve even in the face of ultimate disaster.

Great are truth and beauty, I would say, and whether they prevail or not is a secondary matter.

It is pleasant to be on the winning side but, for some obscure reason in the human heart, it is better to be yourself, and right within yourself, even if that involves danger, hardship and death.

But I have still something more to say, if you will bear with me a little longer. I have said things about the attack on human culture by violence. We do not surrender to that. We will do our proper and fundamentally important work, even if we have to die to do it.

But there is a more insidious way of losing our honour, and that is by subordinating our gifts to propaganda.

I want to speak as plainly about propaganda



as I have about these little dictator-murders of culture, and to say, with an equal plainness, what we original literary, artistic and scientific workers, who set a value upon ourselves and upon the gift that is in us, should do and will have to do if we are confronted with—what shall I call it?—an urgency to propaganda activities.

Now I have had some experience of propaganda. For a time I was in control of the propaganda against the German Government conducted by the British Ministry for Propaganda from Crewe House, and the facts are given without justification and concealment in my *Autobiography*, and in a book by Sir Campbell Stuart, the *Secrets of Crewe House*.

The work I did was done in absolute good faith, and the gist of the business is that we, who lent ourselves to propaganda, were made fools of and ultimately let down by the traditional tricks of the Foreign Office.

We were kept in the dark about all sorts of secret entanglements to which these gentry had committed the country, and we were allowed to hold out hopes to the German people of a liberal post-war settlement our masters had no intention of making. We were tricked and, through us, the German liberals were cheated, and what these tricksters of the British Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay imagined they were doing except being very, very diplomatic

and very clever about their diplomatic crossing and generally having the laugh of the better, I cannot imagine. Better, I say without a blush. Every disastrous thing that has happened in the past twenty years was clearly foretold by a galaxy of writers and thinkers twenty years ago. Our politicians and officials were, relatively speaking, little, purblind, mean chaps. Orders and titles cannot alter that. It filled them with joy to snub the highbrows. The evil state of Europe today is traceable almost directly to the want of imagination, the self-protective cunning, and the deliberate breaches of faith made by them during those eventful years that immediately followed the Great War.

Well, once bit, twice shy, as the English proverb has it. I am not going to be a stalking horse for the British Foreign Office again.

This is no remote problem I am discussing now. It is in all our minds here. I have been approached, and I suppose quite a number of us here have been approached, more or less officially, to do propaganda in Europe or America. One job suggested to me was to go to Paris to lecture in the good old liaison style, singing the praises of dear old Colonel Blimp and dear old Colonel Bramble, and explaining how very simple and democratic our British system is. I was to be made much of. Who knows if I might not have been given a ribbon for my

coat? the effect of me and my fellow radical writers going through our hoops obediently and faithfully, upon the still slightly critical and suspicious republican and radical side of the French intelligence, was to have been highly beneficial to the British diplomatic schemes. Such as they are. It would demonstrate that we were all good little government boys when it came to a show-down, that the real leaders of humanity are these bawlers and scribblers and knowing politicians, Hitler in hysteria and Mr. Chamberlain and his umbrella.

Well, I have written and spoken very plainly about the contemporary British oligarchy and, war or no war, I intend to go on doing so to the end. It is a mental paralysis for India, and it blocks the way to any sincere federal association of the more genuine democracies of the world. You will find all that set down very carefully and precisely in the *Fate of Homo sapiens*, and I shall keep on saying and writing just exactly what I am moved to say and write about our side, or any side, in this dismal world situation, until I am forcibly stopped. If I lend myself to any propaganda, then by all my standards I shall be damned.

And I will be damned if I lend myself to any propaganda.

That is where I am in regard to this propaganda business and that, I hope, is how we all stand.

Most of us know that this time the propaganda activities are going to be much intensified, they are going to be far more cunning and elaborately misleading than ever before. I don't know how our French friends stand with regard to the Quai d'Orsay. Maybe they will tell us.\*

Some of the writers who succumb to this are fascinated, I suppose, by the idea of effective intrigue; some are bribed by simple flattery and the importance of semi-official touring; some are such simpletons as I was in 1916 and believe that what they say will be noted, respected and honoured. But the reality of the case is, that any writer or artist or teacher of repute, who allows himself to be put on a wire and dangled in this fashion, according to the narrow ideas of some Director of Propaganda, Herr Goebbels, Lord Perth, Lord Lloyd or what not, fails to grasp his real significance in the world. He is getting into low company. He is falling short of the essential aristocracy of his profession.

This issue is a plain one. It involves us all; no part of the world of thought and creative imagination can escape it. It is a conflict between gangster adventurers or dull politicians on the one hand, trading on old national jealousies and resentments, stale and decaying and now

\* They have told us. They are under orders for the duration of the war.

poisonous dogmas and fear, who are blundering us down to destruction. That is one side of it. On the other hand, opposing this is the directive power of the fearless and unhampered human intelligence, expressing, educating and discovering. For this last, and for its supremacy, we of the P.E.N. Club stand. This is the fundamental choice in life for every intelligent person, and by that choice mankind will triumph or end in complete disaster. We cannot avoid taking sides. No one can stand aloof. There is no neutral region in this conflict; no middle way.

We are in revolt against this game of Power Politics which seeks to monopolise all this world for the triumphs of such poor fools as these leaders we have examined. We are not concerned in their infernal wars. We are in open and plain rebellion against them. •

It is abundantly clear that none of the existing state and administrative organisations in the world, whether they are democratic, pseudo-democratic or authoritarian, are competent to carry on our collective human affairs. They are a menace, therefore, they are manifestly a sanguinary menace, they are a poisonous entanglement of the civilised life. Why should we creative workers cringe to these bonds that cut into us and will ultimately destroy us? Why do we not set ourselves to the plain need of evoking a new order in the imaginations of men?

We don't know how to set about it! What of that?

That is precisely the reason why we must go on as freely as possible. It is clear to all intelligent men that none of us know enough, nor have we got our own minds sufficiently in order, to create a better system. All the more reason for sustaining a storm of thought and bold discussion and enlightenment. All the more reason that the human mind should have the utmost freedom and opportunity to shape a new conception of right living.

It is intolerable that it should be restrained in this subtle and difficult renaissance by the officials and agents of the limited, obsolescent, belligerent State. It is intolerable that we should allow things to remain in such a train that these manifest inferiors can cripple and endanger the mental life of our race.

We must be unhampered.

The opposition of the human intelligence to the contemporary State is now plain and unavoidable. It is one thing or the other. And, bear in mind that when I say that, I mean *all* contemporary States. I am not taking sides. I am not being a politician or a propagandist. I am proclaiming the revolt of the human intelligence against every form of State control.

This opposition has been put very forcibly by the secretaries of the German and Austrian P.E.N.

Clubs in exile, in a recent letter to the *Manchester Guardian*. They give a list of German and Austrian writers, all patriots in 1914, all now neither for nor against any militant government, but opposed to every government that sets itself against liberty.

And from another point of view, also, the assertion of mental freedom and free criticism is becoming a primary duty for all intellectual workers. Under the war stresses of this time, which show no sign of immediate alleviation, life is being *collectivised* with extraordinary rapidity. In every country, not merely under the dictators but everywhere, the control of food and housing, of staple commodities, of great industries and transport, is being taken over by the state. I doubt if it will ever be possible to restore the old go-as-you-please system again. But this means a vast increase in the responsibility of those in control, and there can be little question of the inadequacy of the politicians, leaders and rulers, into whose hands these things are falling. Only one thing can control them, and that is an enlightened public opinion. I do not think the world can escape collectivism, but unless we insist upon the supreme necessity of free criticism, universal instruction, free publication, free discussion, it will be collectivism in the dark. As you have it now in Russia, in Germany, where it is rapidly developing new forms of privilege and

tyranny. In Britain and America you have collectivism coming on in the twilight, because their schools are poor, their universities timid and inadequate and their newspapers irresponsible. The plain need of the world is light and more light. The slogan that should unite all the intelligence in the world is "*Collectivism in the light.*"

Here in Stockholm a remnant of writers faces the plain issue before mankind. Which are the master and which are the servants in the service of our species?

Are the creative and intellectual workers, the universities, the teachers, the hunters of knowledge and wisdom to be at the beck and call of obscure government officials obeying the behests and even anticipating the wishes of some gangster adventurer, some financial trickster or some vote-wangling politician; or are they the masters whom it behoves all governments and social organisations to heed and serve?

Is an enlightened world public opinion, instructed and sustained by a great educational renaissance, to rule a world reborn, or are these adventurers to be left free, by our silences and our disorganisation, to destroy mankind?

Can there be any doubt among us here of the answer? Is there any question that the imaginative and creative brain is the supreme value in human life, and that its freedom and dignity are



the primary concern of every civilised man? Is there any question that these belligerent sovereign states which rule us everywhere, their bosses and their officials and their cants, are now an intolerable menace to everything worth while in human life? The whole intellectual life of man revolts against this intolerable, suffocating, murderous nuisance, the obsolescent national State. A world revolution to a higher social order, a world order, or utter downfall lies before us all.

## EPILOGUE

AT Canberra they said they found my last paper very stimulating, very stimulating indeed; they also said that I did not seem to realise how much my ideas were already carried out in the schools—the exclusion of the Bible, I ask you? and Our Empire Story—and then very hastily, before I could say anything more, they began to talk of other things.

Suddenly, after the *News Chronicle* had turned down my article on *Discussing Royalty*—the King and Queen were going to visit Bournville that very week and it would *never* do—I tired of writing articles that were answered but never read and of reading provocative papers that were never even answered. I had thought of all sorts of irritating things to say at Jodhpur, Baghdad, Athens, but I left them unwritten, and instead I determined to write a book, rather to satisfy myself than for any other end. That book perhaps you will read some day. It is called *The Fate of Homo sapiens*, and it discusses with care and precision whether a creature so inattentive and wilful as man can ever survive the mighty dangers that now close in

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## Towards Midnight (continued)

the first large town, about 70 miles north of Ingolstadt, it was beginning to get dark. There we waited for two hours or more.

Up to that time no incident of any interest had occurred, and the chance of escape had been very small. It was hardly worth it in the daylight, and we were now a devilish long way from the frontier. However, Buckley and I decided that if we got an opportunity any time during the night we would take it. After leaving Nuremberg we went slowly through a fairly dark night. It was not too dark to see that we were travelling through a well-wooded and rather hilly country, and our hopes began to rise. On leaving Nuremberg, Buckley and I took the two corner seats near the window. It had been decided in the carriage that as Buckley and I were best prepared, both in the matter of food and by the fact that we alone talked German, the others should give every assistance in their power to get us away. They were a good lot of fellows in that carriage, and the spirit of self-sacrifice which existed in Fort 9, where three nationalities were crowded together, was beyond anything which one could possibly have anticipated.

Towards midnight, after we had shut our eyes for an hour to try and induce the sentry to go to sleep, I hit on a plan, which I believe now to have been the only possible solution of the problem. There were six of us and a sentry in a small corridor carriage, so that we were rather crowded, both racks were full of small baggage, and there was a fair litter on the floor. When the train next went slowly, and when I considered the moment had come, I was to give the word by saying to the sentry in German of course, 'Will you have some food? we are going to eat.' Then followed five or

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